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LILITH

WINTER 1996–1997 THE INDEPENDENT JEWISH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE Vol. 21, No.4 $4.50

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OLUME 21, NO.4

LILITH

WINTER 1996

Lilith is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam. After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, the Holy One created a woman, also from the earth, and called her Lilith. Lilith said: "We are equal because we both come from the earth. . . ."

(From *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b)

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FROM THE EDITOR

Okay. The pear. Joining us for the first time with this issue are readers who ordered the magazine because our new pear logo caught their eye in our first-ever ad in The New York Times Magazine, so we figured we ought to be explicit about its meaning. Please don't tell me you couldn't figure it out. It's all about Eve, the First Lady of Our Biblical Consciousness. Eve, the subservient female, the one who takes the rap for wanting to eat the apple off the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The feminist alternative to Eve is, of course, the courageous Lilith, Adam's first companion, the woman who spoke out for gender equality. Lilith, this magazine's namesake. Thus we present to you the pear, in a kind of rough artistic and semantic (if not olfactory) antithesis to Eve's apple. Readers long familiar with LILITH (and who may not peruse our rival, the Sunday Times) are seeing the pear for the first time here. LILITH welcomes responses from all of you: sketches, as well as words.

LILITH magazine, now celebrating its 20th anniversary, has lived for two decades without a pictogram or any clear visual representation of the magazine's status as an alternative to the expected ideas about Jewish women's lives, our thinking and our behaviors. But the direction of the articles we publish has been pretty clear.

The current issue of LILITH runs the gamut from a report on the flowering of secular and religious scholarship on Jewish women to our cover story on names, a piece I think every woman can identify with. It includes material contributed by LILITH readers, who responded to a call for "names stories" on this page a few months ago.

In between is "Healing," one of the longest special sections LILITH has ever published. What makes healing a feminist subject? Only that women seem, at least in our imperfect era, more comfortable than men saying we're sick, caring for the sick, sharing our fears about illnesses yet to come. David Hirsch, Director of the National Center for Jewish Healing, sounded it very plaintively when he asked me in a panel discussion in Seattle recently, "What about this gender issue? Nobody talks about it, but all the wonderful rabbis and lay people I work with at the Healing Center are *women*. Where are the men?"

The men who are involved in visiting the sick regularly tend to be gay men dealing, understandably, with AIDS. (We plan a feature on AIDS in an upcoming issue.) Or the men are rabbis, combing the traditional liturgies of Judaism for psalms and prayers to use in chaplaincy work, so that Jewish sources (some of which we highlight in the LILITH pieces here) can come into people's lives when they may be most in want of a healing breath, a song, a kind word, a fable, or an empathetic ear. Since much Jewish behavior in the 1990s has women opening doors for men, we trust that these moving articles will do likewise. I cried each time I read "Bathing Pearl."

Dear reader, please let us know *your* responses.

Susan Weidman Schneider

Honorable Women

Natalie Pelavin of Flint, Michigan has made a contribution to LILITH in honor of **Esther Leah Ritz** of Milwaukee, saying, "There was a certain woman who loved the mitzvah of tzedakah very much. Her commitment and enthusiasm have inspired many to follow her example."

Joel Glazer has made a contribution to LILITH in honor of the 73rd birthday of his mother, **Malchie Glazier** of Wilmington, Delaware.

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Meredith Tax Tackles the Silence of Women

Women's World Organization for Rights, Literature and Development—Women's WORLD—is a small organization with an enormous goal. "In far too many countries, women who try to have a public voice are met with hatred, contempt, suppression, exile or death. Whether the agency of suppression is the state, the publishing industry, religious authority, or the family, all forms of silencing and exclusion must be seen as censorship," declares their May 1996 mission statement.

Women's WORLD chair Meredith Tax, a long-time feminist activist and author of four books, knows first-hand about both censorship and sexism. A 1994 campaign orchestrated by the Christian Coalition targeted Tax's book, *Families*, for allegedly undermining "traditional" values. She also has repeatedly encountered hostility and dismissal from male writers. She recalls the 1986 conference of PEN, the international writers' organization, which was held in New York and chaired by Norman Mailer: "This was supposedly a gathering of the best writers in the world, but when I got there I noticed how few women were on the panels, something like 17 out of 140.

"So Grace Paley and I organized a protest. . . . Out of this we formed a women's committee. We organized events, got a number of women on the boards, and changed the climate of PEN considerably."

A few years later, PEN sent Tax to an international congress in Holland, where, once again, very few women were visible. Again she formed a women's committee—this time, for PEN International. "Unfortunately," she says, it became impossible to function because the committee constantly had to fight for the right to exist. If you have to fight to be, you can't do anything else. And we wanted to accomplish things."

Indeed, by 1993 those involved in PEN's women's committees had heard about several cases of gender-based censorship. One involved Taslima Nasrin, a Bangladeshi writer threatened with death by an Islamic group that considered her work malicious and blasphemous. Nasrin captured international headlines with the help of PEN's international women's committee and its organizational successor, Women's WORLD, and eventually relocated to a safer environment.

"Whenever women get too loud, religious and government leaders target us."

"As the strength of fundamentalism increases—not just Islamic fundamentalism, but all fundamentalist trends—these kinds of calls will increase," Tax says. "Fundamentalists will join against us. Whenever women get too loud, religious and government leaders react and try to subordinate us. Writers are obvious targets."

Women's WORLD is also concerned about the treatment of women's issues in publishing and education. "When people who write critically about gender arrangements cannot find publishers, this is censorship," says the group's mission statement. "When girls are not taught to read and write, this is censorship."

"A lot of people talk about functional literacy, but that's not what we're interested in," adds Tax. "Do we want women to learn to read and write merely so they can follow instructions in packages of birth control pills? Of course not. We want the same kinds of literature men have. We want books about girls and we want to strenghten the publishing industry. Our philosophy is simple. If you don't have a voice, you can't do or defend anything."

As to her own role as a leader and advocate, Tax is passionate and eloquent. "I see myself as owing my life to the women's movement. It gave my life meaning it could not have had otherwise. Jewish women, like me, have been very important in this movement. The contradiction between love of the mind in Jewish tradition and the actual position of women in Jewish society is very sharp. But there is enough support in the Jewish tradition for ideas of change and social justice to give one a place to stand and try to change the tradition itself. It's then logical to want to do that for the rest of society."

—Eleanor J. Bader

Women's WORLD is located at 208 West 39th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001; (212) 947-2915; fax (212) 947-2973. Copies of their first pamphlet, "The Power of the World: Culture, Censorship and Voice," are available for $5.

Finding Power in a Black Doll

Twenty-five years ago, a Cape Town speech therapist named Helen Lieberman paid an illegal visit to the South African black township of Langa to check up on a little girl whom she had treated. Concerned for the child's welfare, Lieberman violated the segregationist laws of apartheid to make the visit. What she found was much worse than what she had imagined.

"I was upset to see [the children's] fear and repression, [and] suffering. . . . The mothers caring for them were unable to extend the physical love necessary because they were caring for so many children in plastic or tin shacks without food or health care," she told LILITH.

Almost immediately, Lieberman began her involvement in community development, helping to provide food, shelter, day-care, job-training, employment—and dolls for the children. "The empowerment of our people," she says, "is happening because of the teaching of the skills of sewing and doll-making to women who have never been employed"—"our people" being the township people; Lieberman, white and Jewish, says she doesn't see race when she looks at a child—she sees "human beings on a basic level: do they have food, homes, schools?"

From those initial projects, *Ikamva Labantu* (The Future of Our People and Our Nation), was born in 1992, because even though apartheid has been overturned, black South Africans still live with high rates of unemployment and poverty. The project offers services to address these needs. Among the aid it has provided: thousands of black dolls.

Research over the decades and throughout the world have shown that black children consistently relate positive adjectives with white dolls and negative adjectives with the black dolls, leading some to point to an impoverished self-image among black children.

Along with Lieberman, Linda Tarry, president of the Project People Foundation—created to carry out this project—and others worldwide, have been working to change that. In addition to fund-raising campaigns, donations, and home-made efforts, Tarry, a black American educator who was introduced to Lieberman's project by the American Jewish Congress, has transported the target 15,000 black dolls to South African children. "It is a crucial ingredient for positive self-esteem," she explains.

Now, black South African women and diabled men are sewing their own dolls in hopes of marketing them in the United States. Tarry has mobilized the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, the Riverside Church, and others to purchase and direct these dolls to black children. The kickoff program, to be held on the eighth night of Hanukah, is scheduled to be a joint program of the New York Board of Rabbis and the African-American Cler Council, which, under the co-chairma ship of Dorothy Tananbaum, will pu chase 1,000 of the cloth dolls. Half t dolls are to go to Ethiopian children Israel; the other half to needy Africa American children in New York City.

—Rachel Kliegm

Contact Linda Tarry at the Project Peo Foundation, 110 E. 59th St. 23rd F New York, NY 10022, (212) 870-6818.

In Secret Sisterhood

Just outside Mbale, Uganda's third-largest city, a Jewish community called the Abayudaya lives secretly, hiding its traditional Jewish practice from its neighbors. Contact with other Jews is difficult, as is marrying within the faith. As Kenny Schultz, who twice visited the Abayudaya, reported for Kulanu, the women of the community tend to marry "out" more often than the men. "It was especially gratifying," he writes, "to witness . . . two women who read their *aliyot* in English. Last year, the women primarily sat in the corner and said nothing. I realized, then, that part of the reason the women were fleeing from the Abayudaya community was because they lacked a religious identity. Without inclusion in the service and in the development of the community, Judaism represented no more than a strange word."

Not all the women have fled, however. A delegation from Kulanu, which works to find dispersed remnants of the Jewish people, recently met with a group of Abayudaya women, bringing them candles for Shabbat and, according to one woman, a renewed spiritual connection to Judaism. Naume Aron, who heads the Abayudaya Women's Association, reports that her group is raising funds to buy a heifer for the community and meets "as sisters once a week to combat family problems. We also learn to pray and sing in Hebrew and talk about various issues of ethical and moral value."

For more information contact Janet Kurland or Rhoda Posner at Jewish Family Services in Baltimore, (410) 466-9200.

"She Did It Because She Believed"

Sara Duker's College Roommates Celebrate Her Short Life

Sara Duker died on Feb. 25, 1996, victim of a terrorist bombing in Jerusalem. An nergetic and dedicated Jew, feminist, nd environmentalist, Sara will always e remembered for her mischievous yes, her sense of adventure, and her edication to egalitarian, *halachic* udaism.

At Barnard College, where Sara and I ere roommates, Sara maintained a eavy course load, had excellent grades, njoyed a thriving social life—and rose very morning at 7A.M. to *daven*. Sarah's ather, who had been her spiritual pillar, ied when she was 13, and she chose to ontinue his legacy by living a religious fe. I, on the other hand, was raised by a rict father who made religious life an bligation. I felt that I was practicing udaism for him and not for myself. When Sara and I lived together, I would et up at 8:30A.M. for my 9A.M. class only o find her with her favorite, colorful *tal-t* from Israel covering her shoulders as he was ending her *tefillah* with the *leinu*. She changed my outlook on udaism.

Sara was studying about the environment at Hebrew University in Jerusalem when she died. On Feb. 22, 1996, my birthday, she e-mailed me and wrote how happy she was in the land she loved so much. She wrote that she was starting up a women's environmental network in Israel and was trying to make sure that it continued to thrive after she returned to the United States.

Three days later, Sara was killed. This fall, the Jewish Theological Seminary dedicated a new *beit midrash* (study hall) to her and her fiancé, Matt Eisenfeld, a JTS student who died alongside her in the bombing. The room is open to all those who wish to study—Talmud, Torah, Midrash—and is staffed by a rabbi to guide anyone who stops by. The following is my own memorial to her: a conversation I had with Shira Stutman, another of Sara's college roommates, one month after her death.

Sara Duker and her fiancé, Matt Eisenfeld

The New York Times
NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1996
Recalling a Life Ended With a Bus Bombing
The Jewish Week
NEW YORK
MARCH 1, 1996/10 ADAR 5756
'So Hard To Believe'
Newsday
Inseparable, Even in Death
The Star-Ledger
Couple's love and ideals survive their hideous fate

SS: Sara was always something of an enigma. Sara is still the only *halachic*, egalitarian Jewish woman I ever knew who was not planning to become a rabbi. I was always so impressed by that. She did things not because she wanted anyone else to look and say "wow" but because she wanted to.

SY: She had so many wonderful qualities. . . . Everywhere Sara went, men fell in love with her. You told her, and she just laughed, kind of knowing that she had this power, flattered, but . . .

SS: I remember that each week, at Friday night services, Sara would get up and offer home hospitality to any who wanted a place for Shabbat dinner. And she would ask people already hosting a dinner to take one more person in. And I always felt a little ashamed if I didn't want to host that week, ashamed in front of Sara, who was so obviously generous.

SY: It just kind of makes me feel as if, what is it all worth if someone like this could die? But I know that Sara would not have wanted any of us to feel that way. Her friends talked about all of the things that Sara would have wanted. She would have wanted us to continue supporting the peace process.

SS: I'm just amazed at how life goes on. I'm amazed that I'm back at work, that everyone's back at work, that things are back to normal—save the stabbing pain in my heart that I get whenever I think of Sara. I'm amazed that she's really dead.

There's a part of me that keeps thinking back to Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, when Tom Sawyer watches his own funeral and then surfaces, alive. I would not be surprised if sometime in the future I received a note, a message, or a visit from Sara.

—Shirley Yakar

LETTERS

LILITH welcomes letters to the editor, articles, fiction, poetry and memoirs. Include one-sentence b
address and phone. For guidelines or return of ms. please enclose SASE: LILITH, 250 West 57th Stre
Suite 2432, New York, NY 10107 (212) 757-0818, FAX (212) 757-5705 E-mail address: lilithmag@aol.c

RACISM OBSCURED

I felt your article on children of black and Jewish parents was very important, and that is why I was grateful to be interviewed by you for this work ("Are You Black or Are You Jewish?" Fall 1996). You raise many issues of personal, cultural and political identity I believe we must all address as Americans. I was disappointed, however, to find my book, *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*, misrepresented.

I am quoted as objecting to elements of my childhood which are described in the book, the experience of being almost forbidden to dislike people of other races. Although it is true that I write about this in one chapter, it is in the context of a general appreciation for the anti-racist education that my family of Jewish American radicals tried to pass on to their children. I do not wish do be confused with the many commentators who trivialize the idea of respect for people of other races with the by now-contemptuous term "P.C."

Even more disturbing to me is the impression that this sort of issue is what is central to my story. I wrote a memoir to describe, protest and analyze white racism, a blindness of vision to both history and contemporary racial injustice I have called "the whiteness of whiteness." I trace my own transformations over nearly 30 years in a black family, raising black sons to manhood. I support and identify with their sense of themselves as black men. As a Jewish mother, writer and teacher I tried to describe why I feel this identification is not only right but sane. Yet there is no mention of this journey, which is the story of my book.

We are living at a time when the concept of "multiracial" identity is becoming fashionable. There is a danger that crucial issues about racism and the racial injustice that sits at the heart of our history may be obscured in this new emphasis. I would not want to be included in this potent erasure; rather, I want to clearly cast my lot with the writers who have spoken out against racism for the past several hundred years. I am sorry none of this was reflected in your interview.

Jane Lazarre
New York, NY

As the mother of a four-year-old bi-racial daughter who is being raised in a Conservative synagogue (and loves it), your cover story meant a lot to me. Thank you for realizing that there are black Jews out there and that they have a story to share.

Janice Patterson
Oak Park, IL

AN INSULT BY ANY OTHER NAME . . .

No, no, no! Jessica Baker is plain wrong! ("This Heard on the Street: Grrrrrrrl!" Fall 1996) Insults masked as affection are still degrading. If your lover calls you a c--t and says it is a term of endearment, RUN! Homosexuals who call each other or themselves "queer" or African-Americans who use "nigger" have just as much of a problem as heteros or whites who use these words, just a different one!

"Girl" presents a special problem because in this country it is a regionalism. When in Rome, accept it. But when applied to a grown woman, it is derogating her maturity. "I got together with the girls" or "my girlfriend" works—always did—because those are colloquial phrases. But calling a secretary or a phone operator "girl" is wrong. If anyone should be sensitive to bad words remaining bad words no matter how used, we kikes should!

R.Winters
New York, NY

QUESTIONS OF MOTHERHOOD

I just got turned on to LILITH and, after reading a handful of back issues, had to write and tell you how impressed I am with the content of your magazine. It speaks intelligently to women with heartfelt and universal stories.

Being that you cater to Jewish women makes it even more special because I am looking to reconnect with my roots. I had a baby last September and this experience has really brought me to a deeper level. I have so many questions that had been part of my thinking but now seem to plague me. Am I being a good mother? What does that mean? How can I bring up my daughter without the dramas that plagued my mother and my childhood? How can I bring her up with the beauty of Judaism yet not shut her out from my husband, who gre up Catholic? Perhaps coming months I will find article in the pages LILITH to help me. Tha you for creating this wo derful publication.

Hope Katz Gil
Alexandria, V

WOMEN'S MOURNIN

Re: "The Mysteries Sacred Space," Summ 1996, specifically Naor Danis's experience of bei shunted aside when she w saying *Kaddish*. Recently attended the funeral of very dear friend. She was member of my Women Spirituality Group. She w only 45 years old and su fered for more than 25 yea with kidney disease and h breast cancer for five years

After the service, whi was conducted with love a remembrance by our tw rabbis and her many friend our WSG gathered arou her coffin and sang throug our tears. No 'insensiti men' dared to stop us. S had requested that h funeral be held in a atmo phere of joy as a tribute her life which, in spite of her pain, was one of adve ture and fun. Isn't it interes ing how differently m view mourning?

Dee Ful
Ft. Lauderdale,

A FRUSTRATED FUNDRAISER

In response to Enid Schat article about funding f participating in Interns f Peace, I thought your rea ers should know about m experience as well (LILITH 'How To': Raisi

(continued on page 4

WHO ARE WE?

EACH OF US HAS A NAME

I always thought Natalie as a boring name so for a couple of years when I was a teenager, I spelled it with a K: Knatalie."

"All through my childhood, I always wanted a name that you get on barettes. Now that I'm in my Os, and every new baby is Zoe, I'm happy to have a non-mainstream name."

"I know a funny hyphenated Jewish family whose name sounds Native-American: the Small-Griefs."

"My name is Irrit and I got tired of no one being able to pronounce it—so I changed it to Elizabeth."

"I have a Jewish last name but I'm Catholic. When I date Jewish men and they find out I'm not Jewish, they feel manipulated. It's not my fault."

"I was always confused as a child because I had two names: Chana and Andrea. One of them was my Jewish side and the other was the one kids on the street could call me."

Making Up Our Shared Name

RABBI ZEISE WILD WOLF

When I married, neither my spouse to be nor I wanted to take the other person's last name as our own, nor did we want to hyphenate, and yet we wanted a shared name. So we decided to take a new last name, and proceeded with the surprisingly difficult task of choosing our name. Eventually we decided on Wolf: it felt right, it "sounded Jewish," and we liked wolves. Our closest runners-up were Harmalakh and Azotic.

While we were at it, we changed our first and middle names too. I was born with the name Cindy Sheryl Olsher and my husband with Peter Joseph Friedkin. I had wanted to change my names since I was 16 or so, and, having wandered through Sasha, Shifra, and others, finally fell in love with the Yiddish name I was given at birth. But Zeise, which means sweet, seemed only half true; I chose Wild as my middle name to tell the rest of the story. My husband chose to change his names to Peterskin I.E.Skin Wolf.

Jew by Choice, Name by Choice

KIERA AVIYA KOESTER

As I studied Judaism in preparation for conversion, the name I'd always loved began to itch and not fit very well. Kristin, you see, is sometimes pronounced "Christian." Even when pronounced correctly, it no longer felt right. I combed Hebrew name books in vain for the right name. At last, it came to me while taking a shower: Kiera. And, for my Hebrew name, I settled on Yakira, which means precious, of which Kiera could be a diminutive.

A year after my conversion, I found a famous Jewish Kiera. Esther Kiera was influential at the sultan's court in 16th century Turkey. Among other good works, she had a hand in mitigating a decree that would have destroyed the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire.

My parents think I'm mildly nuts. Most people were less emotionally involved and kindly and quickly adapted to my new name.

It took a little time before it felt right. At first, it was like when I went to write my name, sometimes I'd forget and write the old one. But, after a while, it started feeling like it was me. Of course I let my parents call me whatever they want.

Sylvia Meister, Sylvia Roth, Sylvia Shapiro And I, Sylvia Rosner

SYLVIA ROTHCHILD

I was named Sureh Henya for my mother's sister who died of cancer just before I was born, but was called Sureh Henya only when teased. Henya rhymes with *zshmenya* (hand) and there were many nasty little jingles that could be made of the two. The worst was, "*Sureh Henya macht in di zshmenya*" (Sureh Henya defecates in her hand).

I was, however, called Surele, Surkele, and sometimes Suki. Surele and Surkele came with little Yiddish words of endearment, like, *tiere* (dearest), *ziseh* (sweet) and *giteh* (good) and were inevitably followed by a request that I do something I didn't want to do.

When I entered kindergarten, Sureh Henya was

I Love My Name

TROIM KATZ-BLACKER HANDLER

My name is Troim, a Yiddish word that means a dream of hope, an ideal. The word is often used in Yiddish poetry. My father frequently introduced me this way: "This is my daughter Troim; she never changed her name." He thought I would. I have never met another Troim.

My father, Menke Katz, was a Yiddish/ English poet. My mother, Chaske Blacker, wrote short stories for the Yiddish press. I don't know whether I was affected more by the fact that my parents were writers or by my name or both.

Although I worked many years as an English teacher, I didn't start writing until the night after my father's funeral in April 1991 and have since written two books of Yiddish love poetry and a recently published English-Yiddish-Japanese guide to Japan.

Lately, instead of just going by my husband's name, I have been hyphenating my name: Troim Katz-Blacker Handler. Handler is my married name. Frank and I have been married since we were too young to vote. My first surname was Katz, which I bore through high school. My names are me.

My parents were divorced when I was in junior high, and my mother, brother and I lived with her parents, the Blackers. When my mother died at 38, my grandparents had my name legally changed to theirs; but I used it only a short time and married soon afterward.

Many people mispronounce Troim; it's troym, one syllable. When strangers ask me what it means, my explanations vary. If I feel I'm in a hostile, possibly anti-Semitic environment, I say it's a last name used as a first name. If the strangers seem "arty," I say it's from Schumann's Traumerai. If I'm with Jews, hostile or friendly, I tell the truth. I love my name.

A Bitter Blow

MARA BENJAMIN

My name usually evokes comment. "Mara? How is that spelled?" Often I am asked what my name means or what language it is. "In Tibetan Buddhism, 'Mara' is an evil Goddess. In Arabic it means 'women' and is a derogatory term used by Berbers. In Hebrew it comes from the root for bitter and means 'bitter woman.'" The last definition almost always provokes a response, "Bitter woman? Really?" "Yep," I say with pride.

A popular theory holds that a person's name may influence the development of that person's character. The first time I heard this idea I wondered what my father could possibly have been thinking when he gave me such a depressing name. I asked and he told me the story:

I was named after a local candy shop's bittersweet chocolate. My father claims that when he looked up the name "Mara" in the Hebrew Baby Name Book, it was defined as "Bittersweet." "Perfect," he thought, "my daughter and my favorite confection will share a name."

My grandmother Ruth read to me from the Book of Ruth one night, telling me that my name was in this important biblical story. My name comes up when Naomi says in grief, "Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara, for the Lord has dealt bitterly with me."

It wasn't until I visited Jerusalem as a delegate to the first World Union of Jewish Students Kol Isha Conference, that I gained a different understanding of what Naomi meant. We acted out the story of Ruth, and I, taking the part of Naomi, suddenly had a revelation: she took the name "Mara" not out of self-pity, but out of strength. The name of bitterness showed the world that God may have dealt her a bitter blow, but she was not going to crumble under it.

Wacky Macky

MAXINE SILVERMAN

My whole life—as a poet, and even before I knew that I would be a poet—I have been fascinated with names. I grew up in a small Missouri town and knew no one else with the name Maxine except a friend of my mother's who had a nervous tic and a chiropractor who owned a pig farm. In the '50's, girls were raised to be "perky," and so my sisters and I used nicknames. My sister Miriam is Mimi and Donna got DeeDee. I was Macky, which meant that the neighbor kids called me Wacky Macky or Mack Truck. Fortunately, John F. Kennedy was elected President and I quickly changed the spelling to Mackie to emulate the First Lady.

I had been told that my middle name Gayle was in memory of my grandfather's favorite sister, but no one told me that great-aunt Golda died in a concentration camp. It wasn't until college that I found out the more precise truth. No one talked about the *Shoah* at all and, in fact, I never heard my middle name unless my mother was angry. "Maxine Gayle Silverman, come here this minute." How difficult it is to grow into one's (adult) name if it is associated with rage—especially a mother's.

So, I was Mackie until my last year in college when I decided I wanted a Jewish first name. I had been spending time with a number of black artists in St. Louis who were all taking African names. When they asked me what my Hebrew name was, I had nothing to say. The obvious choice would have been to use the Hebrew name I had been given, but my sisters and I were not given Hebrew names since girls, explained our parents, were not called to the Torah in our congregation. At age 20, I named myself: Rachel. I chose it for no other reason than that I liked it. A couple of years later, I reclaimed the name my parents had originally given me and, I guess, when I began to publish at about 24, I began to introduce myself as Maxine.

Later in my 20s, when I was visiting relatives in Canada—actually Golda's daughter, the only member of my grandfather's family to survive the war—someone asked me my Hebrew name. I confessed I had none. My cousin's neighbor explained that his cousin Max was called Meir in Hebrew. And so, one afternoon in Toronto, drinking tea, I became Meira. My voice still trembles with emotion when I state that I am Meira.

In my 30s, I became active in an egalitarian synagogue on Manhattan's Upper West side, and one year, prior to Rosh Hashana, I was informed that I would receive an *aliya*. The rabbi asked for my full Hebrew name, meaning both my parents' names. My father is named Abraham, but my mother, Jeanne, was never given a name in Hebrew (just her two brothers were.) More nervous than angry, I mentioned this fact to several people. One woman murmured in an offhand way, "You could name her yourself." What an astounding reversal of power! To name one's own parent! The mere possibility overwhelmed me and I carried this secret mission with me for a long time, learning more about Jewish culture and myself and my mother along the way--but I still could not bestow a name on her.

Years later, married with two children, I continued writing poetry and began to garden. The act and nomenclature of gardening opened many poems, and one day—as I wrote a poem I understood to be about planting columbines and friendship among women—I named my mother. I was trying to find the Hebrew names for birds I would want in that garden when I came upon Tsufit, a hummingbird, and I was attracted by its delicacy.

These days my mother is failing. When I say *Mishaberah* for her, Tsufit bat Devorah, I feel a tenderness that leaves me shaken. A powerful intimacy flowed from the act of naming her Tsufit, the name I will mourn her by in time.

"My parents gave me the Yiddish name of Yudel Raizel. I felt like an old lady so I changed it in grade one to a Hebrew name, Yehudite Shoshana."

miraculously transformed into Sylvia Helen, a name as cool and English as the original was warm and Yiddish. I was born in 1923—the year of the Sylvias—and there was no escaping fashion. There were four of us in my class: Sylvia Meister, Sylvia Roth, Sylvia Shapiro and I, Sylvia Rosner. If I'd been born ten years earlier my name would have been Sarah, ten years later, Cynthia, later still Sandra, Susan or Sharon.

I learned quickly to answer in Yiddish to Surele, in English to Sylvia, in whatever pleased me to Suki, in Hebrew to Sarah. I shifted from the culture of home to the culture of school and back again. I juggled without knowing that I was juggling. My friends call me one thing, my husband calls me another, my children and children-in-law and grandchildren another. I sign my letters to my children's families with an inscrutable initial.

The Wisdom of Change

SOPHIA BATSHEVA ROSENBERG

I was the seventh child in my family. My parents were all out of names. Everyone who needed someone named after them had been appeased. The story goes that it was my great uncle Bill who solved the problem by suggesting that my Hebrew name be Batsheva (meaning seventh daughter) and that I be called Betsy. So I grew up Betsy and liked it fine (except when people used it to refer to their car or their cow). It never occurred to me to want to change it.

I moved to the West Coast. In a guided meditation when I was 28. I was taken to meet "the inner teacher." I could not see her, but I heard her name clearly: "Sophia." Later that week, riding my bicycle, I caught a glimpse of gold in the gutter and stopped to pick up an I.D. bracelet. "Sophia." Again.

I told a friend this story and mentioned that I was thinking about being called by it. (Which I didn't know until I heard myself say it.) She was enthusiastic and immediately began using it and introducing me to others as Sophia. It was surprisingly vulnerable, like being called a very intimate name by strangers, or having some dark, secret part of myself exposed. Betsy had always felt like a child's name but Sophia was definitely a woman and it took some growing into. When I found out that Sophia meant wisdom, it made using it even more of a challenge.

One day in Vancouver I happened to bump into my cousin in this synagogue. She had been researching our family tree and had come across a great great aunt on my father's side named Sophia. Sophia Rosenberg, just like me. So there it is. I am named after someone after all. It turns out that she never had children. Sophia Batsheva. The seventh daughter of wisdom.

The Pronunciation of My Name

RACHEL S. HAVRELOCK

I am living in Rabat, Morocco, a place where I allow myself to be Rachelle instead of Rachel. It has a musical ring to it when my boyfriend and his friends speak of me: "Rachelle, the American." This name enables me to be another person: one who spends days at the Prince's swim club and nights in Rabat's hottest night clubs. Rachelle does not teach

"I only found out who I was named after a year ago. My grandmother had had a baby who died before my mother was born, my namesake. Now what I thought was just a common name, Amy, has become meaningful."

Sunday School, as I did in America.

Before coming to Rabat, I was Reheleh who lived in Oujda, a small town in the Moroccan interior, where I stayed with a modest and strictly Muslim family. As Reheleh, I walked through the town in long robes concealed beneath a *djeelabah*, a ground-length cloak with a hood. Reheleh is a mystery to the men who pass hours in coffee shops and the women who rush through the marketplace.

But when the days became so hot I could hardly step outside, and the oldest brother of the family began to speak of marriage, I knew it was time to shed the robes and the name. I came to the coast of Morocco where Reheleh became Rachelle. But, somewhere, outside of Rachelle and Reheleh, stands Rachel surveying the scene and wondering what lessons she will bring from Morocco to Sunday School.

A Name in the Closet

MELANIE KAYE/KANTROWITZ

My father's name is Kantrowitz. He changed it to Kaye in 1942.

At the dyke bar in Portland I tell my best Jewish friend that I'm thinking about taking back my mother's maiden name "Kaye is a made up name," I say, "It has no history." Amy, historian, tells me, "Just because a history isn't pretty doesn't mean it isn't history."

Kaye is both history and closet. History *is* a kind of closet. Kaye is Kantrowitz Kaminsky Keminetsky Kowalsky Klutz Korelowich Ka... (think about asking every Jew you know: what was your name?)

– adapted from *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology*

Feminist Son, Angry Mom

ANN KLAFF LONSTEIN

When my son told me that he wanted to take on his bride's last name, I heard myself say, "No!" How, I asked, could he simply renounce who he was, who he had been for the past 26 years? He responded by asking why Becky should. "It is not the same thing," I said, understanding intellectually that it was, but feeling emotionally that we were being disowned. In the end they made another choice.

The Power of a Name

ESTHER GERSTENFELD RADICK

My legal first name is Esther, but the actual name on my birth certificate was Estera. An anonymous immigration officer Anglicized my name when I arrived in the United States at the age of five months. I was born in Stuttgart, Germany on October 27, 1946, to Polish Jewish Holocaust survivors. My mother chose to name me in memory of her mother, who had perished at Treblinka.

For many years, I felt my name, with its overtones of the biblical Esther who "saved the Jews," was a burden. I was the oldest child, born right after the war and, compounded with my name, I felt that I had to accomplish great things to make up for my family's loss and be worthy of my namesake. Now that I am nearly fifty, I have a different perspective. I, like many other second-generation Holocaust survivors, have always keenly regretted the absence of grandparents in my life. But now I feel that my name gives me a special link with a grandmother whom I could never actually know.

Out of the Flames

PHYLLIS PACHECO

"Your name is Phyllis," Miss K greeted me that September morning, my first day at school. Mama had reassured me that this was the public school's kindergarten, so as far as I could make out, I was in the right place, but Miss K was awfully wrong. I am Lifsa, darling Lifseleh, named for Bubba Lifsa who died long ago in a faraway village. Bubba Lifsa was independent. She owned a shop and drove her cart to market regularly. In her home there was the family closet filled with precious gifts from grateful women whose confinements were soothed by her special powers. Bubba Lifsa could *daven*. She was the *zuggener* who whispered the prayers for the other women who sat close to her behind the curtain in shul.

Bubba Lifsa would know what to say to Miss K who knows my American name before I do. But I am afraid. Suddenly, and forever, I am split in two. "Jewish girls need American names," Mama explains later, "and it's better not to let it be known who we are, not right away." The shul where the women looked to Bubba Lifsa for when to say *ome-ayn* had been burned to the ground. I could see the flames. Yes, Phyllis is better.

Time passes. Phyllis has a report card, a diploma, a job, a driver's license. She has a credit card. She votes. Lifsa stays home. She doesn't go out.

Again, time passes. It is Simchat Torah in the new Temple. Rabbi invites the women to approach the *bimah*. I am the first to receive an *aliyah*. *"Ta-a-mod Lifsa bat Isser v'Zissel,"* the rabbi intones. "Let Lifsa, the daughter of Isser and Zissel, arise and give honor to the Torah."

I whisper to Bubba Lifsa: "Here we are, together at last, our name called loudly to our Torah. What have you to say now?"

One Woman, 2 Marriages, 3 Cultures, 4 Names

KAREN ALKALAY-GUT

Karen Hillary Rosenstein. A child writes out her name when she first begins to label her work in school and examines that name for what it is: a newly formed public identity.

My name was foreign to me.

In the first place it was not the name I should have been given. It was not the name of my grandmother, whose very mention elicited tears in my mother's eyes. Haya Kayleh. That name, my mother repeatedly reminded us, was offered at the registrar's office in England when I was born, but was only accepted after Anglicization. I can imagine the London clerk looking up at my parents and perhaps down at me, the bundle in their arms, and, thinking that he would spare me years of the shame of refugee status, refusing to hear their broken English clearly. Haya Kayleh became Karen Hillary.

I remember feeling just a bit guilty at my relief every time my mother told me what my name should have been. There were even times when she tried to return my name to its intended original and actually called me Haya Kayleh, eliciting my unmitigated rage.

She never tried too hard. My grandmother (may her soul ever be blessed) was short, blond, and beautiful, with patience and talent for handiwork, and I was large, rebellious, ungainly and inclined to misunderstand any lesson in womanly arts my mother tried to give. And the fact that I clearly didn't deserve the name of such a woman contributed to my shame and fury.

The Hillary part was bad enough. No one in my American Jewish day school had ever heard of a girl named Hillary; Karen was more than acceptable, and by using my first name and ignoring the British and Yiddish specters, I could almost pass as a normal child.

Except in my Hebrew class. I remember the first day of school, the Hebrew teacher requested that we write our Hebrew names on our drawings. I was totally bewildered. I remember as

if it were today that I looked at the drawing of the girl next to me and copied what she had written in the corner: Hana. I was only five when I was first discovered to be an impersonator.

At the age of 22, I married a Sephardic Israeli named Nissim Alkalay, and my identity changed. I was now the proud owner of a truly exotic and enigmatic and rhythmic name. It provided me with a mystery and beauty I had never before known. That year I began teaching English at the State University of New York at Geneseo. Without my wonderful name I might have been terrified of standing up before a class of 18 year olds. Their anti-Semitism was open and not addressed toward me—not with my obviously Spanish name. I was a spy in the world of the *goyim*.

The divorce from Nissim Alkalay did not create in me a desire to give up his name. There was a clause in our settlement that the family names of my children would always remain Alkalay, and I did not want to divorce my children. But when I married Ezra Gut, and the Office of Internal Affairs in Israel automatically changed my name to Karen Gut, I never bothered to initiate proceedings to have my name officially changed to Alkalay-Gut.

So I have one name to sign checks with, Karen Gut, one name to write with, Karen Alkalay-Gut, a few names forged into the building blocks of my character, and one name—Haya Keila—to remember as a debt to live up to.

"Each person has a name," my husband reminded me when he first read a version of this exploratory essay, quoting the Israeli poet Zelda whose most famous poem is read most often over the graves of battle heroes. For me, it has been the final metamorphosis of my name that has given me the strength, the nerve, and the daring to return to its earlier manifestations.

Even though I know a Rosenstein by any other name remains whatever she was in the first place.

•

Each of Us Has a Name

Each of us has a name,
given to us by God,
and given to us by our father
and mother.
Each of us has a name,
given to us by our stature
and our way of smiling,
and given to us by our clothes.
Each of us has a name,
given to us by the mountains,
and given to us by our walls.
Each of us has a name,
given to us by the planets,
and given to us by our neighbors.
Each of us has a name,
given to us by our sins,
and given to us by our longing.
Each of us has a name,
given to us by our enemies,
and given to us by our love.
Each of us has a name,
given to us by our fast days,
and given to us by our craft.
Each of us has a name,
given to us by the seasons of the year,
and given to us by our blindness.
Each of us has a name,
given to us by the sea,
and given to us by our death.

Zelda, the poet, a hasidic Jew born in Chernigov, Ukraine in 1914, immigrated to Jerusalem in 1926 and died in 1984. Her full name was Zelda Shneurson Mishkowsky. She went only by her first name, which was not an uncommon practice for female poets in Israel at the time. The poem above is adapted from the Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse, *edited and translated by T. Carmi.*

A Dad's Choice

SEENA CANDY SWEET

My name is SEENA CANDY SWEET. No, really, seriously, that's my name. It's on my birth certificate. It's not made up. No, I'm not a stripper, either. It'' not Tina, Deena, Sheena, or Zeena. It's *Seena.* S-E-E-N-A.

My parents saw a film back in the 40s with an actress by the name of Seena King or Crown (my dad can't remember). They loved that actress, so I was named after her.

My middle name, CANDY. Yes, that's what my Dad chose. No explanation.

SWEET is my father's last name and his father's before him. From where? Someplace in Belarus? Minsk? Kiev? Poland? who knows. Not England. Probably shortened from some longer "-sky" name. When I was younger, I used to dream of naming daughters of my own Barbara, Susan or Debbie. Now I think I'd give them exotic names. Maybe Gabriella. But definitely nothing silly.

Wave of Emotion

RABBI LEILA GAL BERNER

When my partner and I decided to have our commitment ceremony, we were thinking of how to create a family unit. Traditionally in Judaism, when a couple marries they choose a new name. We wanted to find something that reflected something intrinsic about our relationship. One of the words that really meant a lot to both of us is the word "*gal*" which in Hebrew means wave, referred to in the morning liturgy of "*Nishmat.*" Also, early in our relationship, we read a book that mentioned that when you tell someone you love them, it is shorthand for the "wave of emotions" that is taking you over. At our commitment ceremony, we both took on the middle name of Gal, and when our daughter was born two years ago, we called her Kayla Moriya Gal.

"Shinui Shem": Change Your Name, Change Your Luck

Averting Death

When I was 15 years old, my mother died. She was 46. At that time, my aunt told me, "your grandmother and great grandmother also died at age 46, so you'd better watch out when you're 46." I always lived in fear of being 46. My panic started when I turned 45. It was then that a scholar/friend educated me about an old Jewish custom. She told me, "Years ago, people used to change their name to fool the Angel of Death."

A New Hebrew Name

May God who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, bless Amy Dara Hochberg who has come for an *aliya* with reverence for God and respect for the Torah and Shabbat and the Festival. Our holy rabbis said that three things cause a person's destiny to change, one of them being the change of the person's name. We have fulfilled what they said and her name has been changed. Her name among the people Israel will now be Ahuvah Nirah bat Baruch v'Shoshana. May the Holy One bless her and all of her family and may God send blessing and success in her every endeavor, together with our fellow Jews everywhere. And let us say: Amen.

Creating Distance From Abusive Parents

Several women have said that they wanted to change their names in order to separate themselves from their parents. In situations where children have been abused, many choose to later to be called for an *aliya* with a new Hebrew name which includes spiritual symbolic parents.

After Divorce

Separating from my husband was a new stage of life—and I had a very hard time using his last name. When I reverted back to my maiden name I felt that the pieces of the puzzle were fitting together again.

IS OUR SUFFERING *TRANSFORMATIVE?*

A Letter to My Congregants

Rabbi Susan Schnur

I took this year off from "rabbi-ing" with the grandiose plan o conquering my illness through sheer intention, alternative ther apies, anthroposophical miracles, et cetera. Instead, I've bee humbled by how much bigger this lupus is than I am—and I'v

pent the last few months productive-
y coming out of denial: I'm not a
ealthy person with a little bad habit
alled lupus; I'm a chronically ill per-
on who is beginning to recognize
hat a radical reinterpretation of daily
fe and goals is the only way to pro-
eed. (George Orwell's Winston
mith said, "If you want to keep a
ecret, you must also hide it from
ourself.")

The rewards of being honest with
nyself for the first time about being
hronically ill are great, and the self-
espect and self-esteem that follow
rom this perhaps cannot be explained
o someone who has not had the per-
onal experience of coming out of a
closet"—whatever that closet may
e. I would guess that there are plen-
y of people in our congregational
ommunity who have a meaningful
elationship with one "closet" or
nother.

I didn't realize the extent to which
had been leading, for so long, a dou-
le life—a sick person posturing as
ealthy. I had pushed myself for so
ong—my whole adult life. So there
ere always two people operating in
ny one body, and one of them was a
ar. Secrets have poisonous effects
ven on the reflective, inner conversa-
ons that those of us with secrets hold
ith ourselves. Keeping a secret made
e sicker, and letting it go—acknowl-
dging to myself and others how ill I
m, what needs I have—helps me stay
ithin my physical means for the first
me ever, and thus to recover.

I've descended into seriously
creased reliance on hard-core lupus
rugs this year—more than I've ever
een on before—and some brand-new
elly-of-the-beast symptoms, like a
sabling allergy to sunlight, mouth
cers, rashes, arthritis so bad that
metimes I can't use my hands to eat
nch, unspeakable fatigue, too much
in at night to sleep—to name just a
w of lupus's revolving problems.

On the other hand, I've come to
alize that fully nine-tenths of my ill-
ss is a matter of social definition.
hat is, if I push myself to put in a
ve-day workweek, to get through a
y without a nap, to run errands, to
do activities at night, to think that I can manage with fewer drugs (because I'm secretly healthy), et cetera—then I make myself extremely sick. But if, instead, I create new norms (and why not? who says the conventional ones are so fulfilling?), then I can function very well. I can read in bed (and who doesn't want more time to do that?), snuggle lots with my husband Lenny, be here when the kids come home from school, spend lots of high-quality lazy time around the house and family. If I am totally planful with my days I can accomplish a lot, because I'm not doubly crippling myself through my own "complicity with oppression," as bel hooks puts it.

Living truly within my physical means for the first time in over two decades I've come to realize how many of the essential beauties of life I loved, but rendered as decorations, when in fact they *are* life—how much pleasure there is to procure from the embroidery on one's pillowcase, the feel of a hand-carved ladle, candlelight (my all-time favorite comforting, transitional object!), layers of antique paint on an old drysink.

I have learned a lot about the spiritual potential of an indifferent world, about how healthy people's view of illness is often just a defense of their values ("It must be awful to be in bed," means that I put a high, probably unexamined value on running around), about how driven I am/was—and what a relief it is to have a different way to access my brief relationship with this planet. I generally feel blessed and optimistic; I hardly do anything that I don't want to do—what a luxury. Sometimes I think that my illness is just a matter of precocity: we'll all be "there" real soon—I'm just ahead of some of the pack.

So I'm trying to spend these months becoming "visible" to myself as a chronically ill person. Of course, I understand "visibility" not only as a call-to-arms of minority political rights movements (including the disabled), but as a close relation to Kierkegaard's idea of "transparency." Kiergkegaard understood transparency as being the fundamental quality of a spiritually whole person. Transparency means that our "real" self, and the self that we present to others (including the face in the mirror) is exactly one and the same. In "passing" (and "passing" can be any way in which we quietly trick ourselves or others—including tricking ourselves about our own importance), we diminish ourselves and live a life that can be collapsed at any moment.

Still, I also recognize, as the Yiddish poet Katya Molodowsky put it, "People are equal, but the lame still hobble." Sometimes I have days, or nights, or a spell of time here or there, that strain even the poet in me, and I thank God when those anguishing moments are over. ■

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plus . . .
Stories That Heal, Psalms for Meditation, and more.

ssing hands mezuzah and healing hand amulet by Katya Miller-Wallin

BROKEN TABLETS/ SCATTERED LIGHT

by Tamara M. Green

Can I be spiritually healed even if I never get any better physically?

For nearly 30 years I have lived, sometimes with detachmen sometimes with an amorphous sense of unease, and sometim with a great deal of rage, but always with a debilitating chronic illnes It is not immediately life-*threatening*—although there have bee moments when it has been—but it is life-*encompassing*; and one of th most painful lessons I have learned from this illness is not the possibility of dyi from it, but the dailiness of living with it.

That is not to say that I have not thought about what it means to look co tinually into the abyss of the unknown, and to feel myself losing my balance the edge. Nevertheless, chronic illness has allowed me to contemplate ma other things, not the least of which are the ways in which my Jewish life has be affected by my illness, and the ways in which my illness has affected my unde standing of what it means to be Jewish. Certainly, I have always known that to a Jew was to know about the suffering of a people, but in what ways can Judais teach about the experience of a single life? What can it mean to me to l *Jewishly* with my illness?

One of the first things I think of is the remarkable *mitzvah* of *bikkur choli* visiting the sick. Although rabbinic discussions focus not on the sick person b on the performance of the *mitzvah* by those who are not sick, I am moved, bo as a recipient and an agent, by the centrality of this *mitzvah* in Jewish traditio It is a profound act of *chesed*, lovingkindness, that is beyond measure.

Judaism is a religion whose spiritual center rests in concrete acts: Torah always telling us *what* to do, and certain deeds are singled out by our ancie sages as having special importance. According to Talmud, one of the most imp tant ways that we can imitate *Adonai* is to perform acts of lovingkindness towa creation, and at the top of this lovingkindness list is the act of visiting the sick. is a way of embracing everyone within the community, a way of acknowledgi the suffering of others. When I am in the hospital, feeling alone, a visit from friend not only breaks that personal isolation, but brings the Jewish embrace my entire community. It is an embrace that recognizes my suffering, and t declares I am not forgotten.

It is also true, however, that what traditional Jewish texts have to say about t causes and consequences of illness is often painful, even alienating, to hear; a I have found myself struggling angrily with it. I hate the harsh and even punit outlook toward illness expressed in Torah—Miriam, for example, who is strick with a skin disease because she speaks badly of Moses's wife—and I am hurt

vell by stories that are predi-ated on the belief that *Adonai* an choose to heal. I know that ve are supposed to feel the resence of the miraculous vhen the Prophet Elisha rings a child back to life hrough the breath of *Adonai* hat is within him, but I can nly think, "Why does *Adonai* ave some and not others?"

What sense can I make of hose Torah portions that seem nly to exacerbate my misery? The portion *Thazria*, for exam-le, lists all the outward signs of eprosy in exacting clinical letail and declares that after the liagnosis of leprosy is made, the eper's "clothes shall be rent, nd the hair of his head shall go oose, and he shall cover his pper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days vherein the plague is in him, he hall be unclean; he is unclean; ie shall dwell alone; without the amp shall be his dwelling."

The isolation of the leper is com-lete and absolute and it frightened ne, for he is forced to leave the camp, o live apart from the community. How must he feel, going through the ituals of mourning for himself, hav-ng been forced to declare himself efore the entire community to be nclean? Judaism is supposed to be rounded in our collective responsi-ility toward *Adonai* and for one nother, is it not? How, then, at such a ime, can we cast out someone who is uffering? What happens to the *chesed* hat we are supposed to feel? What as happened to *Adonai's chesed?* Are ve so horrified and so frightened by vhat has happened to the leper that ve must banish him from our sight? Does the leper's suffering arouse in us eelings that we cannot tolerate? Was t possible that this banishment could ver happen to me? Was I, somehow, ke that leper?

There are texts, too, that while not ealing specifically with illness seem o stand as a reproach to me. Everywhere I read that we are created *'tselmo*, in *Adonai's* image. What about me? If I was created in *Adonai's* image, does that mean that *Adonai* also walks with crutches, has difficulty breathing, and suffers from digestive trouble? *Ha-neshama lach v'ha-guf pa'alach*, "The soul is Yours, and the body is Your handiwork." Why, then, did *Adonai* do such a lousy job with my body? And, finally, if I dared to look over the edge of the abyss and speculate about the afterlife, I found that the rabbis say that the body is of value because it comes from *Adonai*, and therefore resurrection affirms that our physical existence is valuable in God's eyes. What could be valuable about this body of mine?

I have made a little list of the various Jewish meanings of illness that I sometimes recite to myself when I'm feeling trapped by my body and despairing:

1. *My illness is a punishment from Adonai.* If illness is a punishment, what did I do that was so terrible; and could I be forgiven?

2. *My illness is a way of making me spiritually aware.* What good will spiritual awareness do me if the pain consumes me? And since I have not gotten any better, does that mean I haven't learned whatever lesson *Adonai* wanted to teach me? What happens if pain becomes a way of destroying faith, not strengthening it?

3. *Adonai loves the tears.* When *Adonai* says to King Hezekiah in *Isaiah*, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears," my only response is: what about *my* tears? Besides, if *Adonai* is full of compassion, how could *Adonai* love my tears?

4. *Understanding is beyond the grasp of the human intellect.* I would like to give understanding a shot; after all, I have a Ph.D. But if I concede that the plans of *Adonai* for the creation are beyond my comprehension, what hope can I have of making sense of what has happened to me?

5. *Adonai controls the world, but not completely.* If *Adonai* created the world, how could it be possible that the Divine Power does not control everything in the creation? Why should I turn to *Adonai*, if *Adonai* can do nothing about my pain? Or does *Adonai* just heal some of us and not others? And why? I would like to believe that *Adonai* is just and *Adonai* is omnipotent; but, as more than one theologian has pointed out, one of these assumptions must be false in the face of human suffering.

Theology and texts aside, there is still the question of finding solace in the pleasurable rhythms of a life lived Jewishly. In truth, these rhythms *are* pleasant, but periodically the spiritual complication of physical illness overwhelm me. Here are some random memories:

• I love going to synagogue—especially my synagogue, where we have worked hard at creating a Jewish community. And yet, even there, I sometimes find myself distressed. I know that it really doesn't matter if I sit when

Rebekah: Giver of the Wellsprings of Life" linen fiber sculpture ©1993 by Laurie Gross : Photo by Wayne McCall

STORIES THAT HEAL

KITCHEN TABLE WISDOM: STORIES THAT HEAL
by Rachel Naomi Remen
(New York: Riverhead Books, 1996, $22.95)

REMEN

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen believes deeply in the healing power of telling stories. During the early years of her career, she practiced modern medicine "by the book," and believed, as she had been trained to do, that her job was to cure illness and not the individual, and that the death of a patient was the result of professional failure. What she finally came to realize, through her work at the Esalen Institute, her study of Buddhism, and the remembered stories that her Orthodox Jewish grandfather had told her as a child, was that the healing of the body was inextricably entwined with the healing of the soul.

In *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories that Heal*, Dr. Remen, now a psycho-oncologist and professor of medicine at the University of California, has collected the stories that she and her patients have retrieved or constructed as they confronted life-threatening illness. What Dr. Remen has discovered in her work is that the most meaningful stories we tell about ourselves are the ones hidden in the cracks and crevices of consciousness—half-remembered moments of joy or pain or anger or acceptance whose meaning extends beyond the words spoken and the images evoked: the soaring eagle in the dream of a woman with breast cancer; a doctor transformed by the clear-eyed gaze of an infant he had just watched come into the world. They reach back inside us, into some secret place, and somehow connect to our spiritual core, helping us find the strength to deal with what is.

—*T.G.*

IN REMEN'S OWN WORDS:

Thirty-five years ago, I was one of a few women in my training program and my male colleagues generally assumed that, as a woman, I had greater comfort and skill in meeting the emotional needs of patients. . . . I would find another doctor standing there ill at ease, who would say something like, "My patient is crying. . . . Can you come?" I was no more comfortable than he in such situations but I realized early that this was part of my ticket to acceptance and so I would go and listen while someone shared with me their concerns and their experience of actually living with the disease we had diagnosed.

At first I was surprised that people with the same disease had such very different stories. Later I became deeply moved by these stories, by the people and the meaning they found in their problems, by the unsuspected strengths, the depths of love and devotion, the rich and human tapestry initiated by the pathology I was studying and treating. . . .

These stories engaged me at another, more hidden point. I too suffer from an illness, Crohn's disease, a chronic, progressive intestinal disease which I had developed at the age of fifteen. So for me these conversations eased a certain loneliness. . . . I listened to human beings who were suffering and responding to their suffering in ways as unique as their fingerprints. Their stories were inspiring, moving, important. In time, the truth in them began to heal me.

—*From* Kitchen Table Wisdom

everyone else stands, but when we sing *L'kha Dodi* on Friday night, I sometimes cannot rise with the rest of the congregation to welcome the Shabbat. The image of turning to the door and bowing in greeting to the Shabbat Bride is so powerful, but I can't do it.

• From the time I learned the word as a child, my favorite Shabbat song has been *Adon Olam*, for *Adonai* is revealed not "merely" as the ruler of the universe but as one who brings comfort and provides shelter for each one of us. But on Shabbat, I felt my eyes fill with tears as I sang the words, *v'hu Eli v'chai goal v'tsur chevli b'es tsara*, "He is my God and my life's redeemer, my refuge in distress." How could I sing these words when I felt that they had nothing to do with me?

• One Shabbat morning, when the physical pain was particularly bad, I wondered whether I could recite a *mi sheberach*, a prayer of healing, for myself. I'm always sorry that I didn't have the nerve that day.

• There were many years when I was grateful that I had made it to another Rosh Hashana, another New Year, but one year, after a summer spent mostly in the hospital with a series of devastating infections, the petitionary prayer that begins, "On Rosh Hashana it is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed: who shall live and who shall die, . . . but penitence, prayer and good deeds can annul the severity of the decree" filled me with dread. Perhaps I hadn't prayed enough, repented enough, performed enough good deeds the year before: that why I had been so sick?

• While preparing for *Pesach* one particularly lousy year, I was struck by the notion that my illness was like *chametz* that no amount of cleaning could get rid of. At the seder, I felt resentment that, unlike the ancient Israelites, I would never be liberated from my burden. As I dipped my finger in the wine to count off the ten plagues, I felt enormous pity for myself—as if the plagues had been sent by *Adonai* not against the Egyptians but against me.

Considering the amount of education that had been poured into my head and the amount of time I had spent in front of a college classroom teaching,

Photographs: this page, Peter Zeray/Photonica; opposite page, Michael P

took me a very long time and a lot of struggling before it finally struck me that I was asking the wrong questions about being sick and being Jewish. The questions I really needed to ask were: Could I be spiritually healed even if I never got any better physically? And if I was not to be cured, what did *Adonai* expect of me?

Since I am an academic, perhaps it is not surprising that I sought the answers to these questions through texts. In the end I discovered two, one talmudic and the other kabbalistic, that provoked in me healing images of enormous power.

The first text, from Talmud, has as its starting point the episode of the Golden Calf. Torah says that when Moses descended from Mt. Sinai with the tablets of law inscribed by the finger of *Adonai* and found the people worshipping the Golden Calf, he smashed the tablets in anger. Although he returned to the mountain to receive new tablets of the Commandments, Talmud explains that the broken shards were not discarded but were preserved and placed in the Ark along with the second set, to be carried by the Israelites everywhere, even into the Promised Land. Both the shattered tablets and the whole ones were together in the Ark of the Covenant. There must have been at Sinai some children of Israel who, like me, were physically broken, and who saw themselves, as I did, in those fragments of the tablets, and who, like me, were relieved to find themselves included in the Covenant.

The answer to the second question—what does *Adonai* want of me?—was more difficult. An approach came from an unexpected source, the Jewish mystical texts of Kabbala. The 16th century Rabbi Luria taught that the spiritual world is the product of emanations that flow from a transcendent God, who could be known only through these emanations, ten in number—wisdom, justice and the like—that were contained in vessels. The divine light contained in these vessels, however, was too powerful to be contained, and all but three vessels shattered as *Adonai* contracted to make room for the creation of the physical world, thus allowing the spiritual to mix with the material world. As a result, seven divine emanations (most notably the *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence) are in exile in this world, the vessels that once held them now broken. And these divine sparks of light, trapped in matter, must be released from their prison; for only with the restoration of the spiritual world to its original completeness will redemption of *Adonai's* creation be possible.

It seems like an impossible task, but Rabbi Luria revealed the way to bring about the repair of the world, and in his solution I find an answer to my question, "What does *Adonai* expect of me?" Every person who acts in accordance with Torah brings home the fallen sparks; everywhere in the world a spark of the Divine Presence waits to be found, gathered and restored; and *Adonai* holds out the possibility to each generation that it might be the one to redeem the world. Each one of us, then, has the potential to bring about *tikkun olam*, the repair of the world, not only through the performance of the commandments of Torah but through acts of *chesed*, lovingkindness. I have come to realize that spiritual repair, both of myself and the world, is possible. I may not be able to do much about the broken vessel that is my body, but certainly I know that I, like the broken set of tablets, am included in the Covenant, and that I, like all the rest of us, am blessed with the task of gathering up the scattered light. It's a task that I'm still working on. ■

Tamara Green *is editor of "The Outstretched Arm," the journal of the National Center for Jewish Healing. She is Professor of Classics at Hunter College.*

WITNESS YOUR SUFFERING

The answer to being at peace with suffering is in the mind. . . . There is no need to avoid the suffering. Witness, accept it, and go on with the rest of your life. What you may find is that though suffering is universal, attachment to suffering differs with individuals. What is love to one may be fear to another. What is food for you today may be bad for you tomorrow. . . . So in suffering, as in pleasure, as in all areas of life, there is no need for judgment. There is only the acknowledgment of the moment and the feeling.

There are times when you may have suffered and, as a result of stepping outside the suffering, were able to view it from another perspective. . . .There are also times when an illness does not leave totally, and you may be challenged to find a way to live with it, without being attached to its cure or dismissal. Making peace with suffering assists your spiritual and emotional growth and develops within you attributes of courage, endurance, acceptance, and flexibility. The essence of suffering does not lie in the ability to circumvent it; it lies in the ability to be at peace within the adversity. . . .

Observe yourself fully experiencing life, not hiding from it, but rather allowing the full gamut of feelings and possible situations. Accept what is. Begin loving your limitations as though they were a gift of a new perspective, wrapped in a beautiful package that is now available to you. In the kaleidoscopic view of life, nothing is isolated; all opposites incline towards each other. While experiencing life fully, you will notice that moments of bliss are hidden in the pain, moments of joy are hidden in the suffering, forms of life are hidden in death, and eternity is hidden in impermanence.

LABOWITZ

From Miraculous Living: A Guided Journey Through the Ten Gates of the Tree of Life *by Rabbi Shoni Labowitz (Simon & Schuster, 1996, $23). Excerpted by Susan Schnur.*

BATHING PEARL

a short story
by Shelly R. Fredman

For 40 years my grandfather Ben saved a thick ponytail of my grandmother's beautiful russet hair. He kept it in a small, sil-ver box, wrapped in tissue paper, folded over upon itself like some precious, irreplaceable egg. One of my last visits to my grandparents' house was a late Friday afternoon right after Thanksgiving. As my sister and I walked beneath bending sycamores and maples, small golden leaves drifted all around us. Sabbath dinners warmed in my neighbors' houses—the smells of roasting chickens, sweet potatoes, brown loaves of bread filled the streets.

"Does she have any hair left at all?" Lisa asked me as we turned the corner. She was busy with a glamorous East Coast career (which I envied) and she had not seen Grandma Pearl in months.

"She has a few white strands here and there. It's hard when you see it the first time, but you get used to it." We could have been going to two different places, my sister and I, given the deliberate way she placed one foot in front of the other and the way I zigzaged and turned. She is forceful; I tend to float and glide.

Lisa and I knocked and banged on Ben and Pearl's door and front window. They had been almost deaf for a long time, and with each visit the two-bedroom house seemed to stretch longer, loom further from its door frame. It was a channel, a tunnel, a pipeline; they were small receding figures.

Lisa's head was bent sideways. She peered between the white blinds, scanning for signs of life. "I think I see someone."

"O.K., O.K." Pearl's voice, threadbare, moving toward us.

She opened the door, one hand clutching her unbuttoned pajama top, a thin white T-shirt beneath it. I recognized the pajamas—flannel with tiny pink roses—the same kind my sister and I wore when we were eight and ten. Ben had bought boxes and boxes of them on closeout to sell in his East St. Louis dry goods store, now boarded up and abandoned. Up in their attic I had seen still more boxes full of pajamas—they seemed to multiply with the years. Pearl would never wear them all.

"Grandpa's in the kitchen. Come on, Ben. Ben," she called, "look who's here." Her powder blue house slippers scuffled and we followed.

Ben sat at the kitchen table tearing a napkin into small square shapes. After h

tore each one, he folded it in half, placed it at the top of a pile to his right, and picked up another. He began tearing that one too.

"Stop with that, Ben. The girls are here. They want to talk to you."

We weren't used to being in Pearl's kitchen—before Pearl had cancer we ate in the dining room and they waited on us, slowly, ever so slowly. Throughout my entire childhood and adolescence, we spent almost every Sunday night eating what seemed to be the same chicken dinner at Pearl's. In later years, we all sighed and groaned, watching the ice cubes melt in our glasses as Ben shuffled out to fetch the soda.

Pearl cooked almost everything in orange juice: chicken, sponge cake, jello, everything. "Orange juice," she would say, leaning forward as if revealing the world in all its mystery. "The secret ingredient."

She would go on and on about food and recipes, a subject none of the rest of us were interested in. "Put it on my gravestone when I die: 'Pearl Rothman never missed making a meal for her family,'" she used to say, "Even during the Depression, when I had to hold down two jobs, I still found time to cook dinner." My sister and I had rolled our eyes at each other, certain we were destined for greater things.

After dinner, Lisa would run off to rummage through Pearl's dusty-pink satin jewelry box, and I would sit in a stiff, high-backed chair across from Ben, listening as he spoke about Torah and sex, his two favorite subjects. He would give over lessons he had learned at the *heder* in Belarutka, stories about King Solomon, epic tales of King David and all the women that kept the king's bed warm in his old age. Pearl's recipes bored me, but I could sit forever listening to Ben's stories.

Sometimes Pearl would interrupt him, telling me about her yellow sponge cake, and how I could learn to make one that was "light as a feather." Or she would draw me away from him, explaining the secrets of a good marriage, how she and Ben played gin rummy every night, and if Ben won, she confided, "I let him take a feel."

In the last few years, as my grandparents moved into the dusk of their lives, I had begun to cling to every word my grandfather spoke. His was the language of wisdom, absent from my everyday world. And recently, as I became involved in studying and living the traditional Judaism my parents had abandoned, I recognized my grandfather's lessons in the texts, coming back to me again. He hadn't made the stuff up, he had been remembering stories he learned when he was a young boy.

I had come to see my grandfather as an ancient version of myself. Pearl and I, however, were like two old goats staring each other down from opposite sides of the mountain. Years passed, but we remained that way. I failed to call her often enough; I refused to attend her Hadassah Eye Bank luncheons; I did not visit as much as she would have liked, and when I did walk into her house, I hated her refrain: "We thought you were never coming." She loved to wave my sister's filigreed Hallmark inches from my eyes: "Look what Lisa wrote me for Mother's Day. Read it aloud."

I was the one grandchild who had ended up remaining in St. Louis, and I was a great disappointment to her. I mostly tried to avoid her anger, focus-

Illustration by Emilya Naymark

ing instead on the gifts my grandfather continued to give me.

In their kitchen, the TV sat on the table before us, a long row of pill bottles lined up on top. "It's so hard," Pearl said. "It's bad enough me being sick without your grandpa getting sick too. He's supposed to be taking care of me. Now I have to take care of him.

"And the lady didn't show up to give me my bath," she continued, "She's supposed to give me a bath on Fridays."

She said it two more times.

I shifted in my chair. Lisa bit at her cuticle and studied where she just bit. I tried to look anywhere except Pearl's face.

"I really wish I could have a bath."

Finally, just when I was about to say it, Lisa said, "Grandma, we'll give you a bath."

Pearl's face lit up. "Oh that would be so good. It would feel so nice to have a bath. Ben," she said, loudly now, leaning toward his one good ear, "Sarah and Lisa are going to give me a bath."

We followed her into the the bathroom. "We have to make this fast," I whispered to Lisa, "All those people are coming over to eat at 5:30."

The fluorescent bulb flickered and then blinked on. Pearl began gathering her things—robe, towels, bubble bath. She ran the water. There was a heaviness in these small acts, everything shaded by the fact that she was dying. Her balding head with white wisps of hair suggested a world beyond this one.

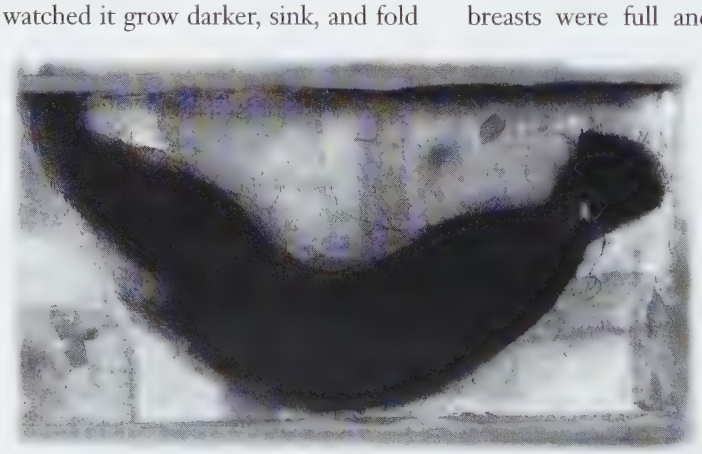
She took a washcloth from the shelf, dropped it into the water and I watched it grow darker, sink, and fold in on itself. Her slow, deliberate movements, each singular and compressed in time, made me think: Ritual.

As she stepped into the tub, I tried to look at her body and look away, all at the same time. I wanted to see what I would look like some day.

Lisa and I mostly stood and watched. Trying to appear useful, I poured some bubble bath into the stream of running water. The bubbles multiplied, clustering like cells. Lisa placed the towels on the laundry hamper. The room was steaming. I was sweating in my turtleneck.

Pearl undressed at one end of the tiny room. Her breasts were clearly defined beneath a white T-shirt. The T-shirt was ragged, thin, as if it had been laundered to its softest, finest hour.

As she stepped into the tub, slowly lowering herself into the water, I tried to look at her body and look away, all at the same time. I was curious to see what I might look like some day and I was surprised, relieved. She was very beautiful laying in the water with her head resting against the wall. Her skin was a light copper, still tanned from the Miami sun she missed now. Her breasts were full and although they were not firm, the nipples were a wondrous pink, innocent as the pinkish flesh of a cat's ear. In her slow acts there was much joy. She ran the washcloth over her breasts and down her rounded white belly.



"Does it feel good, Grandma?" Lisa asked, "I love to take a bath." She was trying to make conversation, to establish a normalcy in this unlikely situation, to make some reason for our being there other than the fact that Pearl had cancer and was dying.

I squirted a glob of shampoo into Lisa's outstretched palm and Lisa washed Pearl's hair.

"She's so soft," Lisa whispered leaning toward me. "Her skin and hair are like a baby's."

Pearl's eyes were closed and she was smiling.

After a while, Pearl sat up and slowly rinsed the soap off with her washcloth. When she was ready to get out Lisa and I moved forward. "I have to get to my knees first," she said, balancing herself at a metal bar and then rising. I held her under her arms, feeling her weight.

Lisa offered a towel. "Wrap it around my shoulders," Pearl said. Then she bent her head and as she gathered what was left of her hair into the towel, she said, "I need my lotion."

I remembered a day, about a month earlier, when my two-year-old, Abigail and I had visited Pearl in the hospital right after her last radiation treatment. Turning into the parking lot, I was thinking of Grandma and realizing she could be taken from us at any moment. I began to see her differently. In the hospital gift shop, I held a silent conference with myself, trying to decide whether to buy the purple flowering plant I was drawn to or the yellow one I knew Pearl would love. I chose pink—an attempt at blending—a resolution we could never achieve in real life.

At Pearl's bedside I began to tell her I loved her, and as I said it, for the first time in my life, I meant it. I leaned over the white sheet, holding onto her and she began to cry.

"I know you always loved your grandpa more than me," Pearl said. "And that hurt me so much."

I never knew she knew. I thought she couldn't tell. I always thought she loved Lisa more and couldn't see that I preferred Grandpa to her. Pearl and I held onto each other for a long time.

Later, I went down to the hospital gift shop again and bought Pearl a pack of lifesavers, the one thing she wanted. Back in the room, I unwrapped a cherry candy and fed it to her. She sucked on it, rolling it around in her mouth, her eyes closed.

Now, in the steaming bathroom, as the mist climbed along the windowpane and edged its way up the silver mirror, I held the cool, white lotion in my palm. A child of divorce, as Pearl also was, I suddenly realized Pearl's Sunday night dinners had been one of the few constants in my ever-shifting childhood. It was Pearl who had been behind some of the most enduring moments of my childhood. It was her harping and nagging and determination that had made it possible for all of us to come together, Sunday night after Sunday night, at her dining room table. And that table, imperfect as it was, with the ice melting in the glasses and the chicken and the jello both tasting of orange juice, was one of the places where I learned about love and what it means to be a family.

There had been years of conflict, years of demands I could not fulfill, years when Pearl had held my sister's greeting cards inches from my eyes. In these past few months, though, both the difficult years and the cards had begun to dissolve. They had been diluted by my grandmother's pain, by the shrinking of her body. It was as if, in shedding parts of her self over these past few months, my grievances were being shed, too. I wanted to do something helpful, to be kind. I began rubbing the lotion onto Pearl's curved back. Her freckled skin was soft, and warm.

I placed Pearl's robe around her shoulders. Lisa wiped at the water soaking the floor and handed me the crumpled wet towel to put into the hamper. She ran water into the tub and I swept my hand around, chasing bubbles down the drain.

In the kitchen, Ben was hunched over his cards, studying them, his eyes squinting to make out a jack from a queen. His yellowed fingernail pushed one card out of the way so he could see another.

Ben used to entertain us with games of gin rummy when we were children. Or Pearl built complicated palaces of cards: spades and hearts leaning in upon each other, mushrooming out from the center. Hush, she used to tell us, one breath and they're down.

Ben looked at his watch. "It's 5:30," he said. "Isn't it getting dark out? It's almost time to *bentch licht*." He wanted

us to light the Sabbath candles. The man had barely been out of the house in weeks—the only time he left was to get a haircut or visit the doctor. He was cut off from everyday things and yet in that fogged and floating Chagall-like world of his—remembering Belarutka, a forgotten train, a game of gin rummy, a bottle of medicine, a Reader's Digest in large print—he knew the Sabbath had come.

Pearl placed the candles in the holders, bending over the stove. She lit the Sabbath lights. Her head was lowered, her eyes closed. Her hands winged the air silently, once, twice, again, drawing in all the broken parts. As if light could make us whole again.

She turned from the stove and wished us a *gut Shabbos*. I went over and kissed her.

I could feel the splendor of the Sabbath Queen in the small kitchen with its television set and rows of medicine bottles, its two bowls waiting on the counter, ready for soup.

"We have to go," Lisa whispered.

I remembered there were people, probably gathering now at my house, to eat leftovers from Thanksgiving dinner.

"We're really late," Lisa said, but we lingered.

Finally we said our goodbyes and stepped outside into the blackness. It was as if we had entered the house from one world, but came out into another.

Lisa and I started walking, the scrape of our feet now in harmony but the sound somehow naked, as if that one sound were all that was left.

"Grandma's different," Lisa said. "You know what she told me? She said, 'You know, Lisa, my hair used to be the most important thing to me, but now I don't even care that it's gone. It doesn't even matter anymore.'"

The branches of the sycamores were silver at their edges, reaching out to each other across the dark night.

"I was so scared," I said.

"Me too," added Lisa.

Our eyes met in recognition—for an instant.

As we approached my house, I could see the cars lined up. Inside, my mother and aunts were rushing around, carrying the half-carved turkey, dishing out purple jello flecked with pineapple bits and cherries. I moved past the noise and movement, scooping Abigail up into my arms. I went over to light my Sabbath candles.

I held Abigail on my hip and circled my other arm across the flames, just as I had seen my grandmother do. I closed my eyes and I could see another kitchen layering itself onto mine. I recalled the quality of the light there, and how it had grown impossibly luminous when Pearl kindled the Sabbath candles. I thought of all of us—my sister and I, two different versions of something that was the same, and my grandfather and grandmother, mother's arms sweeping out in wide arcs, and I thought about forgiveness. Forgiveness most of all. ■

Shelly R. Fredman *is a writer of fiction and essays who lives in St. Louis.*

How Did They Get Into Her Womb?

by Sarah Blustain

A DES daughter battles corporate power, personal grief, and her mother's guilt.

In an old-fashioned coffee shop in midtown Manhattan, documentary filmmaker Judith Helfand stops mid-sentence in the story of her DES-related cancer laughing. Her forkful of chicken has just flown to the floor. "The chicken," she announces slowly, with clarity, into the tape recorder, "just flew off my fork and on to the floor."

The 32-year-old Helfand is obsessed with recording. For four years she worked for pennies on documentary films, following the lives of the homeless and mentally ill, sleeping on a friend's couch for lack of funds. Then, within days of being diagnosed with cervical cancer—which ultimately claimed her entire reproductive system—she began filming the story of her own illness, and her recovery.

"All the years that I've been working on this film," she said in November, seven years after her diagnosis and a week before the film's opening at the Margaret Mead Film Festival, "on some level it was as if—I know it sounds ironic—I didn't really have to deal with the cancer because I felt like I was in control."

The film, accepted for presentation at the prestigious Sundance Fim Festival in January and for a national airing on PBS in the spring, is entitled "A Healthy Baby Girl." The title is rife with irony and grief, as is all of Helfand's speech. She funny and dry and wry, and she tells the story of her illness with a certain humor and without tears. In her telling, it is the doctor who cries.

"I couldn't even pronounce it," she explains about the diagnosis of DES-related clear cell adinocarcinoma, "and I said to the doctor, 'Well, listen, just do me a favor and promise me that while you guys are in there you just take out the tumor and you don't, like, nick anything, because I really want to have a lot of children.' And he looked at me and his eyes welled up with tears." He told her she would never bear children.

The drama of the story that Helfand has recorded dates back to 1947, when the Food and Drug Administration approved use of diethylstilbestrol (DES), a synthetic estrogen, to prevent miscarriages. Despite research that questioned the wonder drug's efficacy and indicated a link to some forms of cancer, the drug was prescribed to nearly five million American women—well-to-do, mainly white, many Jewish—before it was definitively tied to the cancer and taken off the market in 1971. Of the 2.4 million daughters of those women—many in the peak of their child-bearing years today—half have malformed reproductive organs, and one in 1,000 are expected to contract DES-related cancer. The Long Island Jewish Medical Center's DES screening center, where Helfand had her check-ups for years, serves 150,000 people, half of them Jewish.

Helfand had been working on a film about DES when her own diagnosis came in

and it was to her peers on the crew that she first turned for support. She even considered taking them with her when she went home to her parents in Merrick, Long Island. "Luckily," she reflects, "my therapist said, 'Judith, are you out of your mind?'"

Today, Helfand rails against the corporate irresponsibility that left her, at the age of 25, recovering from a radical hysterectomy. "I would sit in my bedroom and say, . . . 'How did this unbridled corporate power find its way into the deepest part of my household and my heart and my body and my uterus and my relationship with my mother and my relationship with my mother's womb?'"

The first thing Helfand thought when she was told that she had DES-related cancer was, *this is going to kill my mother.*

"I would say probably even before I thought about not being able to have children, I thought about how I was going to tell my mother. I mean, this was just going to ruin her life and she was never ever going to be the same. And that definitely took precedence before I thought about my health or the fact that I had a life-threatening disease that was coursing through my cervix." After all, it was her mother whose best intentions for protecting her child had backfired. And it was her mother who would later say, "I wish it would have happened to me."

"My mother," says Helfand, "like all DES mothers, has lived with the fear that her child might get hurt, her child might get sick, her child might not be able to have a child. And even though they know that they did this for all the right reasons, they still feel, 'Well, why did I take this, . . . what if I questioned my doctor?'"

At times, in the film and in person, Helfand seems to have more sympathy for her mother than for herself. Early on in the film, after her operation, Helfand and her parents sit around the dinner table, uncomfortably grieving. Her mother tells her why she must be depressed: she has no nice clothes or money or a decent place to live. And she asks her daughter, in a moment that could be heard as cruel, "So, uh, how long are you going to mourn?"

Helfand understands and, when questioned, she explains: "I'm like, 'Hello, ma, and I don't have my reproductive organs on top of that.' [But] that's just your mother scraping the bottom of the barrel. She's trying to think, 'Those are the things I'd be able to fix, those are things that are fixable, right?'"

Helfand's mother's voice echoes in her own, and it echoed in her mind as she resisted going home to heal. "It was like, 'I'm not going to be able to feel because I'm going to be afraid that if I feel too much, it will hurt my mother.'"

But home she went, back to the room where all her "fantasies about having a Jewish family" began. And through her camera's lens she watched her family in the "throes of a wild-ass psychological experiment. . . . It's zany, it's crazy, we're not made for this!"

They may not have been made for this, but Helfand has made something out of it. She has made a deeply moving film about one family's understanding of sickness and recovery. She has made a powerful argument for corporate and pharmaceutical responsibility. She has made a tool for a national outreach campaign, organized around the spring PBS broadcast and led by Rabbi Dianne Cohler-Esses, to inspire activism on the grass-roots level.

And she has created a very Jewish story. Helfand reflects on how her grandmother would respond—with disbelief—and on the generations of Eastern European families, "who have been trying to have families for eons." Her film, co-written by Yiddish writer and translator Irena Klepfisz, is set to an original techno-traditional score by the Klezmatics, of which she says, "all the familiar instruments, the clarinet and the violin and the accordion, started to grind and started to morph and started to sound very synthetic. It was all about technology slamming up against family and continuity and taking it for a pretty awful ride."

"This is about whether we live in the future or we don't live," she says. "So that's what Jews have always written about. I mean, this is just different players but we've always written about how we can make it into the future and into the next generation." ■

To rent or purchase "A Healthy Baby Girl," an ITVS film, call (212) 925-0606. For information on Jewish community events, call (212) 875-0456. For information on DES exposure, call (800) DES-9288.

Photograph by Ted Helfand

SACRIFICE

A SHORT STORY
BY BATYA SWIFT YASGUR

Have you ever wondered how much pain you could endure?

"A simple procedure," said the surgeon, tapping his pipe against the onyx ashtray. "Entirely routine." He unscrewed the pipe, shaking out its charred contents. "What does it involve?" The young woman uncrossed and recrossed her legs. Dr. Simpson refilled his pipe as he talked. "When you fell on the ice, you injured the blood vessels in your knee and they leaked onto the joint. It's called hemarthrosis.

"What we do," he continued between puffs, "is to remove the blood that leaked." He rose and pointed to skeletal gray impressions on black x-rays hanging on a luminous screen.

As he expounded on the technical details of the projected surgery, Esther found his voice fading in and out of her consciousness.

Gray bones. Gray bones, shoveled into the gaping jaws of an insatiable machine spit into the yawning abyss of a mass grave. Shouts. *Juden, Raus!* Swastikas. Knives Blood. The smoke of crematoria rising heavenward in swirls of gray and black.

". . . the area where the femur abuts on the cartilage . . ."

"Yes, yes, I see," Esther murmured at appropriate intervals.

". . . so the fluid will be drained. And then, my dear, you shall be as good as new!"

"Thank you doctor." Esther reminded her mouth to smile. "You've explained it all very clearly."

"We should operate as soon as possible. Why should you suffer longer than necessary?" He pushed a button on his desk phone and picked up the receiver. "Please schedule Mrs. Shaya for a room up on Orthopedic some time next week. Yes, that'll be fine. One week from today."

Esther's tongue darted over her lips. "What time should I be there?"

"You'll get all that information in the mail." He began to empty his pipe again. "Usually patients check in the day before surgery to have a variety of tests, and to meet the anesthesiologist."

Esther clutched her bag. "The what?"

"The anesthesiologist. We can't give you anesthetic without an anesthesiologist, you know. He'll determine which is the best painkiller—which will make the surgery the more bearable."

"What if I don't want it?"

He sputtered into his pipe. "Well, ultimately the decision is yours, of course. I suppose you could grit your teeth and bear it. Though why anyone in her right mind would want to do such a thing is beyond me."

Esther groped for a plausible answer. The doctor's paternalism was alluring

threatening to smother her in painlessness and comfort.

"No anesthetic," she said. Just like that. No explanation, no justifications.

The doctor shrugged. "Of course that's your decision. But I must tell you that all my years of clinical experience speak against it. You know, I was operating on legs before you were even a dream in your parents' minds!"

The resentment roiled and bounced around in Esther's stomach. What did he know about nightmares in her parents' minds?

The doctor swivelled his chair away from the desk. "You're a very stubborn young lady. Go home and talk this over with your husband."

Talk it over with your husband. Perfectly sensible advice from a sensible man. But impossible. Pain was her private solace, crouching in her heart, relinquished and shared with no one. Not even Joseph, with whom she shared all else.

Now, leaving the elevator and buttoning her coat, she saw Joseph's blue car. In it they had dated, had floated endearments during their courtship, had been transported from their wedding. Trust Joseph to bring it as close as possible, to spare her the pain of walking.

Let me help you." Joseph whisked out of the car, kissed her and took her arm, guiding her into the front seat. "What did the doctor say?"

She repeated it, minus clinical details, minus anesthetic.

"Surgery!" Joseph's large, warm hand closed over hers. "You poor darling. I'll take care of you."

This was unbearable. She turned away, looking out of the window. Damp grayness hung over the city. People pulled coats tighter, scurrying toward their destinations. A man scuttled by, one hand holding his hat, the other struggling with a bulky portfolio. The car passed carriages carrying swaddled infants, wild-haired old women with torn skirts and blue fingernails picking through garbage cans, sore-covered men huddled in doorways, last night's moldy bread still clutched in frozen fingers. The city in wintertime.

Esther shivered and closed her eyes. Always, she had always enjoyed this life of luxury and ease. Her childhood room, coordinated pink wallpaper, carpet, and curtains, chosen by her mother. Soft slippers, generous parents—parents who denied her nothing, made no demands, imposed no restrictions.

Not like others, she. Not like Beth Nimstead, who lost her mother when she was ten. Or Rina Laufers, whose father was in the hospital, dying of cancer. Or her *own* parents, the weight of their love a secret burden—who had suffered; they had lived real lives. But she—she was wrapped in the artificial coccoon of security and comfort. Loathsome, despicable, a worm treated like a butterfly.

This surgery, the knife unblunted, would be her opportunity. To live up to her parents' standard, to take her place among the heroes and martyrs of the concentration camps, among the homeless people of the city.

Were they still alive, her parents would be proud of her. True, they never talked about that dark world to her. Their memories remained locked behind gentle hands, warm embraces, tormented eyes. The dam of silence contained no chink for blocked words to trickle through. No way to say, "Tell me who you really are. The dreams that died in Auschwitz and those that were born. The smell of blood, the sound of choking children. Tell me how you go to bed at night, and how you get up in the morning." No, those words would have been blasphemy, like uttering the unutterable Name of God. Only a High Priest could take such license and penetrate her parents' Holy of Holies. She, their daughter, was unworthy.

There were words elsewhere, reams, rivers, floods—shelf after library shelf of books, their pages screaming out their bloody information. Words that only made the silence louder.

They pulled up to the house. "Esther, are you okay? You look awfully pale." Then, more softly, "Are you in a lot of pain?"

Pain? Compared to the whips and knives that flashed and cut through her parents' haunted lives? She forced a smile. "Just tired."

Well, you go right to bed. I'll make you a hot tea." Joseph was fussing about in the kitchen. He didn't under-

Illustration by Brad Hamann

A PSALM AND A SONG

TEN PSALMS: THE COMPLETE HASIDIC REMEDY

In the late 18th century, Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav designated ten psalms as having particular power to bring healing. As a unit, he called these ten "The Complete Remedy" (Tikkun Haklali). *Here is a sketch of each psalm, as outlined by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub in* Healing of Soul, Healing of Body: Spiritual Leaders Unfold the Strength & Solace in Psalms, *which he edited with the Jewish Healing Center in 1994 (reprinted with permission from Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock VT):*

1. Psalm 16 starts with a powerful expression of trust and faith in God and gratitude for God's goodness. The psalmist feels the nearness of the Divine Presence and confidence in Divine Protection.
2. Psalm 32 urges us to look deep into ourselves, to examine where and how we have distanced ourselves from God and to return to God as the Source of true life and joy.
3. Psalm 41 speaks explicitly about sickness, vividly portraying the torment and suffering endured by so many, expressing thanks to God for the possibility of healing, and stressing the need for caregivers to be sensitive, understanding and supportive.
4. Psalm 42 beautifully depicts the yearning for God "as a heart thirsts for springs of water," describing the pain and suffering of both the individual and the nation in exile while affirming the hope of ultimate deliverance.
5. Psalm 59 is a cry from the heart of God to deliver us from the forces that oppress us and cast us down, echoing David's plea for rescue from Saul's soldiers and his thanksgiving upon receiving Divine refuge and support.
6. Psalm 77 is an important turning point in this collection beginning with an expression of anguish and abandonment, the pain and persecution of a long bitter exile, but moving into an affirmation of faith that God is ever-present and compassionate, despite appearances to the contrary.
7. Psalm 90 offers a profound comment on human destiny, contrasting human frailty and the brevity of human life with God's eternity and omnipotence, asking God for wisdom, joy, security, support, and compassion.
8. Psalm 105, after calls to sing and praise, traces the national history of the Jewish people from the covenant with the Patriarchs and Matriarchs through the Exodus from Egypt, which serves as a prototype of Redemption.
9. Psalm 137 takes us back to the acute pain of exile, weaving in nine verses a tapestry of grief, despair, memory, affirmation, and anger . . . which may be viewed as the proverbial darkness that comes before the light.
10. The Ten Psalms conclude with Psalm 150, a paean and musical symphony of praises.

—excerpted by Susan Shnur

stand that he was twisting a knife as painful as the surgeon's. "Why don't you do something relaxing?" He produced the Times and spread its gray expanse across the kitchen table. Joseph, like an eager child, bringing a present. Obligingly—to humor the child—Esther looked down at the paper. A 70-year-old woman stabbed in her apartment. Pot-bellied skeletal children with wounded eyes staring at her out of drought-ridden Africa. Relax?

But then—but then she remembered. Next week. Next week she, too would join the Community of Suffering, the secret world of tormen No more would she carry the guilt an shame of other people's suffering. Nex week the knife would cut her as well.

And then—amazingly, wondrous ly—she did relax. For the first time that Friday night, Esther enjoyed he soup without seeing before her eyes th line of emaciated children, their empt bowls dangling from between bony fin gers, their eyes a reproach, awaitin their ladleful of gruel. She allowed th sweet softness of the Sabbath bread t linger on her palate without remindin herself of the homeless man's mold crusts. She savored Joseph's touch, n screaming widows, their young hus bands wrenched from their sides an thrown into the pyre, appearing to dis lodge her from her marriage bed. Ther was dread, yes; but also peace.

Peace. As she packed her mode valise. (Her parents, too, must hav thrown together a few necessities befo boarding the train, a hideous parody o civilized departure.) Peace, as the c traveled past the slushy specimens wretched humanity sprawled across th sidewalk. Peace, as she passed stretche with the toothless and malodorou threaded with bags and tubes of salin nutrition, muttering and groanin through hushed hospital hallway Peace, through endless forms, dotte lines, numbers and signatures. Th offering, signing herself for sacrifice.

The bed with stiff white sheet Glittering needles, crystal vials eager sucking her blood. Joseph, apologi flowing from him like the blood fro her veins, finally leaving for his offic The anesthesiologist, with glasses an mirthless grin, visiting her at D Simpson's behest.

"Yes, I know, Dr. Simpson said yo don't want anesthetic." He looked her as if she had a new and dangero disease. "But you may change yo mind. Pain is not pleasure, you kno Ha ha." He drew up a chair to th white bed.

His voice droned on. Dosage Measured packets of ease and betray Esther closed her eyes. *Tomorrow*, s promised the bony faces of h enshrouded parents, *tomorrow I will worthy.*

Esther's knee was washed and disinfected, the knives honed and arranged, the doctor soaped and scrubbed. White-coated and masked, the tobacco odor mingling even through his mask with the smell of soap and disinfectant, he bent over her. He clucked his tongue and made a sound that could have been a chuckle or a reproof.

"You certainly are a stubborn young lady. But the anesthesiologist is standing by in case you change your mind."

Esther waved her hand and the nurse wheeled over a table of evil looking instruments laid out on a blue cloth. ("And they came to the place of which God had spoken, and Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand took the knife . . .")

Dr. Simpson pointed to the knife-decked table. "Scalpel." ("And the angel of God called unto him from heaven and said: *Abraham, Abraham, touch not the lad, nor harm him, for now I know that thou fearest God and did not withhold thine only son from Me . . .*")

Esther waited. For the angel. But no. No angel, as no angel had come forth to intervene and stay the hands of the Nazis who slaughtered six million offerings. Esther squeezed her eyes shut; then it happened.

Red, blinding pain broke over her in waves. The surgeon was wearing a swastika on his forehead, right between the eyes, where Jewish men don their phylacteries. His kindly, solicitous countenance a leering mask, executioner torturing his victim.

The walls of her consciousness stretched in and out with each searing pulse. She gripped the table. Ovens. Gas showers. Whips. Barbed wire. Knives. Flames. All the phrases and descriptions from a thousand library shelves came bubbling over her now in a cascade of boiling lava. Images fought for space. Black smoke. Gray sky. Red pain. Flames consuming her knee, her body, her soul.

The surgeon's voice ("sutures . . . scissors . . .") stoking the fire as she struggled against the cotton wool mist threatening to suffocate her. To faint was to submit, to betray her parents, the six million, the homeless.

The pain diminished somewhat. She was aware of being bandaged now, expertly and efficiently. Someone lifted her sweat-drenched body onto the stretcher. So it was over, then, the gray mist rose before her eyes, and this time she allowed herself to slide gratefully into it.

Esther struggled to open her eyes, aware of hot throbbing in her knee and a familiar warm hand grasping hers. So it really was over. She had done it. ("And an angel of God called to Abraham a second time from heaven saying, *Because thou hast done this and not withheld thine only son from Me, I will unconditionally bless thee and thy seed . . . and then all the nations of the world shall be blessed.*")

Esther closed her eyes and slept. Sleep, once the black quicksand of comfort, now the sweet companion of a clear conscience, the entitlement of a hero returned from battle. She had endured and triumphed.

But as she closed her eyes, an uneasiness was growing, thrashing, more urgent than the arrows of pain shooting through her knee. It nagged and pulsed above her right eye, through sleep and into the wakefulness brought on by Joseph, brimming with coffee and good cheer, who had come to take her home.

The car moved through the gray city streets. Panic mounted. Same streets. Same homeless ladies bent over trash cans, muttering to themselves, while the same homeless men, wrapped in plastic bags, still huddled in doorways.

Then she knew. She had hoped, that God would keep His promise. That her sacrifice would bring blessing to others. Her pain, she had thought, could not leave the world unchanged. But the promise was a lie. Only her world inside had changed. The world outside had remained the same. And now she knew why her parents had chosen silence. ■

Batya Swift Yasgur *is a mother and freelance writer/editor living in New Jersey.*

THE HEALING VOICE

Psalm 105 enjoins people who are suffering to do something strange: "Sing! Sing to God! Compose songs and play instruments." Here are Rabbi Maurice Lamm's musings:

In our sophistication, we think of singing as an art form; but the Torah teaches that to sing is a blessing. In terms of the spirit, singing is on a higher level than speaking. . . . Through song we learn to better endure our hardships. When life is not a song, sing! . . . Singing lifts the heart.

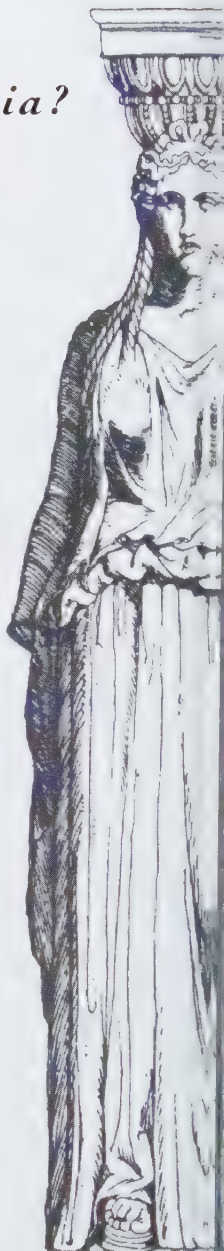
Even if all we do is chant *"Oy Vay,"* over and over, to a tune we improvise—*Shiru lo*, "Sing to God." Even a melancholy song somehow takes us out of ourselves and gives expression to our inner being. Sometimes I break out in a *niggun*—a melody that uses sounds shaped only by my emotions. It articulates a groan that forces its way out of my interior; sometimes, it expresses an indescribable joy inside me that's in search of an audience.

Sometimes we sing a familiar *niggun* with friends with whom we sway in oneness. It crystallizes our common despair, and the sadness gets dissipated in fellowship.

The Mi-Shebeyrach *prayer, asking for healing, set to music by Debbie Friedman has become for many listeners—and singers-forth—the way to appreciate both the prayer and the opportunity for the relief that comes from breathing deeply and singing aloud. Debbie Friedman's albums are available in most Judaica stores or call Sounds Write Productions, Inc. at (800) 9-SOUND-9.*

CONSTRUCTING (NOT DECONSTRUCTING) THE JEWISH FEMINIST PANTHEON

What's going on behind the pillars of academia?



by **Sarah Blustain**

In 1978, Shelly Tenenbaum was 23 years old and applying to graduate school at Brandeis. She had just organized a lecture series on Jewish women in the Boston area and, trying to impress her interviewer, started to speak about the experience. As Tenenbaum, today an associate professor of sociology and Jewish studies at Clark University, tells it, the gentleman bent over, put his fingers on the bridge of his nose, shook his head and said, "Oh no. Not this Jewish women's stuff again."

Little did he—or Tenenbaum—know that "this Jewish women's stuff" was about to take off.

In the 20 years since feminist activism inspired women to take a stand in the hallowed halls of the Academy, feminist theory has become a reigning discourse. It has introduced the question of gender into nearly every discipline, and Jewish studies has been no exception. The ranks of Jewish women scholars have swelled from a handful of activists to a field of academics. The dozens of women LILITH spoke with represent a range, but merely a fraction, of those who are creating Jewish feminist scholarship. Their books, once few in number, are finding willing publishers and space on library shelves. The Jewish Theological Seminary and Brandeis University now offer Master's degrees in Jewish women's studies. Even the once predominantly male Association for Jewish Studies, after some initial heavy opposition, boasts a Women's Caucus with 250 members.

This quantum leap has been paralleled off-campus by a huge expansion of Jewish women's participation in Jewish life, connected by many strands back to the scholars themselves. Whether it was Yale University professor Paula Hyman petitioning at the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly in 1972, for women's full participation in synagogue services; JTS professor Judith Hauptman searching the texts for evidence that would allow women greater rights in cases of Jewish divorce; or Judith Plaskow reconfiguring the patriarchal theology entirely, remarkable women scholars have helped create a revolution in the way the rest of us position ourselves—and are permitted to position ourselves—as women in relation to Judaism.

On campus recently, feminist scholars have also begun to reposition themselves, both in relation to activist feminism and in relation to the American university system. A disengaged and multi-faceted feminist theory has developed that discourages community-based concerns from overlapping with "purer" research. Even Yale's Paula Hyman, known in the 1970s both for her Jewish feminist activism and her scholarship, says that today her work *is* her activism. Her marching days, she says, are over.

Participating fully in academia, a younger generation of Jewish feminist scholars are beginning to have their work read and respected throughout its academic disciplines. They are still likely to be marginalized in women's studies as Jewish, in Jewish studies as women, and in all of the traditional disciplines as parochial. However, they have achieved a level of security in which some of the work done by activist Jewish women scholars in the late 1970s and early 1980s is critiqued, and sometimes quite severely, by the same scholars for whom the first wave helped pave the

In 1976, as she was finishing her graduate degree in Jewish
ry at Columbia University, Paula Hyma
two fellow students published *The*
Woman in America, a book about Ame
Jewish women's history of the 19th and
centuries, through a non-academic pub
The landmark book resonated with the

c, but in academic circles, says Hyman, it as "resoundingly ignored." So non-tra-itional was this book that when Hyman ame up for tenure at the Jewish heological Seminary, she hesitated efore submitting it for consideration.

"We came into this as scholars from a ackground of feminist activism," relates lyman, who also in the late 1970s co-ounded the Jewish feminist activist group zrat Nashim. From its initial study of ewish texts on women, the group went n to spearhead the move toward a more galitarian Judaism. "Feminist activism nade us aware that we knew nothing bout Jewish women."

Judith Hauptman has taught almud at the Jewish Theological eminary, the Conservative move-nent's primary institution for raining rabbis and educators, nce the early-1970s and today rites of searching the traditional ewish texts "for protofeminism nd the outer limits of leniency." It the activist group Ezrat Nashim, nd not an academic source, how-ver, that she credits with her own eminist awakening. She had been doing Talmud about women, but ot from a feminist perspective" hen Ezrat Nashim asked her to hoose some passages for a text tudy. "I must say that although *I* hose the passages, *they* were the nes who raised my conscious-ess," she recalls.

Rela Mintz Geffen, a professor f sociology at Gratz College, elieves that access to the texts nemselves radicalized those par-cipants. "What mattered was that there as a woman who knew the sources and ould go to the primary text."

Says Hyman, "As the first generation, e really drew on our feminist sensibili-es because we did not have mentors. We *d* have the feminist movement."

Today there are mentors, there are eers, and there is theory, all of which uild a wall of legitimacy around Jewish minist scholarship. And academics are o longer called on, as they once were, to our change in other arenas. "With the neer number of women [participating in e Jewish community], it makes it easier r women in the academy to step back nd say, 'We're not going to be tivists,'" says Ruth Abusch-Magder, ne of Hyman's graduate students at le. "I have the luxury of concentrating n my studies and not forming a Rosh Hodesh group and I still know that there will be a Rosh Hodesh group to go to." (She was planning to attend one that evening.)

But the new devotion to academia may not be simply a question of luxury but of survival as well. As Lynn Davidman, a professor of sociology and Jewish studies at Brown University, explains, "There are fewer jobs: they're harder to get. Now, to get a job you have to do it in a way that is academically respectable, and political activism is not [considered to be] academically respectable."

"Jewish studies was a stepchild. Women's studies was a stepchild. So you have the marriage of two stepchildren."

—Lori Hope Lefkovitz

A copy of a book entitled *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction* arrived hot off the presses at the Lilith offices as this article was in progress. In the very first chapter, Rita Gross, professor of philosophy and religious studies at University of Wisconsin, argues for a rigid boundary between community and academia. "The study of religion," she writes about her field, "has nothing to do with religious instruction, conversion or spiritual direction." This signals a radical shift in the content of feminist writings. It is almost inconceivable, today, that a reader of new Jewish feminist scholarship would find a call like this one of Judith Plaskow's in *Standing Again at Sinai*: "the connection between politics and spirituality requires the transformation of Judaism itself." The new research can't be called "conservative"—it is filled with new perspectives on the texture and meaning of women's lives—but the drive to confront and change society at large seems to be gone.

Naomi Seidman, an assistant professor at the Graduate Theological Union, put it succinctly, "We're the feminists who aren't a danger to our male colleagues—the people of my generation who really covered their tracks, who have a million footnotes, who don't preface their books with a cry for revolution."

Compare, for example, the work of two Jewish feminist scholars. Last year Judith Hauptman, one of the earliest pioneers, published a book on marriage and divorce in the Talmud. It was written for an "intelligent lay readership" and is intended to show that "nothing stands in the way today for male religious leaders to make Judaism totally egalitarian." By contrast, the writing of Temple University assistant professor of religion Laura Levitt would be nearly impenetrable to the lay reader. In a snippet from "(The Problem with) Embraces," an essay, she concludes, "I wish to maintain my voice even as I write about the interplay between familiarity, intimacy, and distance between me and these texts. Acknowledging these tensions as I read and write is part of what it has meant for me to engender Jewish knowledges."

Although these two scholars certainly do not represent the whole range of writings of women of their respective cohorts, they are emblematic of a generational shift. Both have employed the techniques of feminism, implying a critique of "patriarchy" and seeking to recover women's presence. Hauptman, however, is hoping to give non-academic women the tools they need to create a more participatory Judaism. Levitt is hoping to give academics a Jewish tool with which to hone their theory.

This distinction speaks volumes about how far Jewish feminist scholarship has penetrated the academic establishment. Just over a decade ago Judith Baskin, a professor of Judaic studies at SUNY, delivered a paper on the biblical character of Rahab the harlot to the Association for Jewish Studies annual meeting. She was interrupted by whispers and chatters from an uncomfortable audience that stopped her

otograph by Barbara Nislick

"As the first generation, we did not have mentors. We did have the feminist movement."

—Paula Hyman

in mid-speech. Today, Levitt can publish a book entitled *Ambivalent Embraces: Jews, Feminists and Home*" ; Naomi Seidman can contend that Hebrew and Yiddish are gendered as male and female, respectively, in *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish*, soon to be published; and Ruth Abusch-Magder, a Ph.D. candidate in Jewish history, takes her primary texts cookbooks written by German and American Jewish women, considering them as "books of *halacha* for Jewish women."

This type of work reflects the innovative iconoclastic atmosphere of the university. These scholars are treating day-to-day life as a serious historical resource: "material historians" like Jenna Weissman Joselit at New York University now examine clothing, housewares and unpublished letters to find evidence of how women lived. Assistant professor of religious studies at the University of Florida Miriam Peskowitz asks, "Can we find archaeological and other material culture, and when we do, what is it that we are finding? Do we look to those few and fragmentary samples of women's writings? To papyrus documents relating the legal and economic transactions of specific women? To rituals enacted by women?"

With so many "assaults" on traditional scholarship, the borders between the disciplines—history, literature, philosophy, and so on—have begun to break down. Much Jewish feminist scholarship is being completed through interdisciplinary explorations. This distinction is more than just a question of where the courses are listed, which departments claim them or which texts are assigned. It is a radical shift in the way scholarship is being done, incorporating theory from many fields. It is a change that to the traditional academic might signal anarchy; to the young scholars, it signals the future.

Some of this interdisciplinary approach is a necessity. The academic job market has collapsed, and those who hope to find jobs are expected to be able to teach a wide range of subjects within their fields. This means that the Jewish feminist scholar working in sociology, for instance, may need to prove that her work is relevant to all students of Jewish studies and to the wider field of women's and sociological studies as well.

Underlying this flight to other departments, however, is also a sense that has persisted since the inception of Jewish studies: that Jewish studies itself is marginal to begin with. "For a long time in the academy Jewish studies was a stepchild, and women's studies was a stepchild, so you have the marriage of two stepchildren" in Jewish feminist scholarship," explains Lori Hope Lefkovitz, who is heading the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College's new Center for Women's and Gender Studies.

The Jewish feminist integration into the larger academic community also is facilitated by a new comfort with being Jewish on campus. Riv-Ellen Prell, an anthropologist and American Studies professor at the University of Minnesota, writes in *People of the Book: Thirty Scholars Reflect on Their Jewish Identity*, that when she began to do research on Jewish women, she was warned that "my work would be read only by Jews and I would be forced to the margins of academia." Prell, as her essay describes it, is now more comfortable with questions of Jewishness, and she is just one of 30 academics included in *People of the Book* who, some for the first time, are casting more than sidelong glances at their Jewishness, academically or personally. "This is a coming-out book," says Shelley Fisher Fishkin, a professor of American studies and English at the University of Texas and one of the book's two editors.

In part, however, Jewish feminis scholars have been forced into the wide university because the Jewish studie department that the pioneers hoped t break into 20 years ago have been s very resistant to change. The rejection i ironic, considering that Jewish studies i an interdisciplinary field itself, and tha the first efforts by Jewish feminist schol ars were in fields like Jewish literatur and history. Nonetheless, nearly ever women we spoke with called Jewis studies "conservative," and Jenna Joseli who was at Barnard as an undergraduat in the early 1970s, says that when th "boys" in Jewish studies do take notice "it is always with a smirk." Paula Hyma recommends that her Yale graduate stu dents who want a Jewish Studies faculty appointment consider waiting until the are tenured to publish seriously o Jewish feminist subjects.

In *Judaism Since Gender*, a ne anthology of essays including several b younger scholars, editors Mirian Peskowitz and Laura Levitt argue th "Jewish Studies as practiced has not b

"Younger people ma take for granted th validity of gender stud ies. I think it's only civi to see us pioneers a part of the process."

—Judith Baski

Paula Hyman photo by Michael Mars

Even the once heavily male Association for Jewish Studies, after initial opposition, now boasts a Women's Caucus with 250 members. Pamela Nadell of American University is co-chair.

self provided space for feminist think-
g, so it has been necessary to interrupt
in fairly dramatic ways."

"Right now," explains Peskowitz,
nost of us aren't actually hired in Jewish
udies. . . . In a day-to-day sense, the con-
rvatism of Jewish Studies is not of con-
ern to me [because there are] all these
aces to be a Jewish intellectual. . . .
ewish Studies becomes so marginal
ecause all the really interesting things
e happening elsewhere."

Listen to the voices of a new generation: tough, uncompromising, entitled. Socialized not to *ask* but *act*. Trained to assume that their classes have a place in university coursebooks, they speak freely about close-minded attitudes at Jewish seminaries and in Jewish studies programs; they speak openly about the shortcomings of their universities and, sometimes, even about the Jewish feminist scholars who paved the way for their arrival.

Now listen to the voices of those original scholars: critical, still, of the conservative Jewish academy they helped to crack, but gentler in tone. Working, still, in Jewish women's scholarship, yet aware that the hardest work of breaking down resistance may be over. And hurt at the way their early work is criticized by women they helped bring into the world of Jewish feminist scholarship.

This internal conflict among some Jewish feminist scholars represents more than a sort of Electra complex, although the killing off of the mothers," as more than one "older" professor put it, may certainly be playing a role. The roots of the divide lie in the very different eras in which these two generations of scholars developed their work.

From one view, Peskowitz's, "it's all about certain women really feeling like they struggled and not feeling appreciated either by their male colleagues or the younger women." (She says she considered writing about the generational divide with Levitt, her colleague and friend.) From another view, Plaskow's, it's all about the younger scholars "needing to define their own path and their own voices."

Either way, "It's painful for those of us who were pioneers," volunteered Judith Baskin, whose book, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, has become something of a primer for the student of Jewish women's history. "It may be that younger people take for granted the validity of gender studies. . . . They bring a much more sophisticated framework of questions than those of us in the past, [but] I think it's only civil to see us as part of the process." As a group, academics don't emote easily, so the bitterness that seeps through is striking.

Naomi Seidman, who like many other recent Ph.D.'s says that the "more successful" younger scholars like herself "owe a lot to the [earlier generation]," tells a story about her own oversight of the pioneer generation. Looking over a book she was just completing, she realized with regret that she had credited the well-established scholars and books but had neglected to footnote a woman, Irena Klepfisz, whose work had inspired her and who had struggled for years to be accepted by the academy.

Seidman's gratitude is evident, but so is a certain distancing from the first group of scholars. "We're standing on their shoulders but—they may hate me for saying this—the scholarship is a lot better. The ignorance that scholars were working on even ten years ago is astonishing. . . . The work that they did is basically obsolete."

Their work, however, has not disappeared. Books that came out of that first, impassioned wave of scholarship are still being read and passed around. Out of those first attempts to find "leniency in the texts," as Hauptman put it, women have become involved in traditional ritual life, and have developed their own set of rituals—Rosh Hodesh groups, feminist Passover seders, *simchat bat* (a feminine parallel to the bris). They have been touched by the attitude that Plaskow embodies when she says, discussing the "post-modern theory" and "deconstruction of texts" that is *au courant*, "I myself really don't understand the value of Jewish feminist scholarship if it is not accessible."

And there is still a demand that the new scholarship be communicated to the lay reader for use in her own life. "They want it in a way that is palatable," says Lori Lefkovitz, who hopes that the RRC's new center will train professionals to communicate to a wider audience. "They want to see how this stuff can be used in lifecycle rituals."

Which, in Jewish—and not academic—history, may be among the most enduring affects of the scholarship after all.

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THE GENESIS LIST

In the Beginning...

Genesis is in. Eve, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and yes, even Lilith, are popping up in every new book. *Everyone and her mother wants to reexamine the compelling story of Genesis. PBS has even launched a series of televised group discussions entitled "Genesis: A Living Conversation." But these new books are not only appropriate for the solitary book reader. Biblical women make a provocative theme for Rosh Chodesh programs, both formal and informal, and for* havurot *and other adult-education venues. Take advantage of the current brouhaha over the Book of Genesis and its sister texts. To give you an idea of what's out there, here is the LILITH Genesis book list, complete with books we love, and some, well, that would make your average book group discussion a bit rowdier . . .*

•Biblical Women Unbound: New Counter-Tales by Norma Rosen (Jewish Publication Society, 1996, $29.95). Fiction writer Norma Rosen uses her novelist's gifts to elaborate on the biblical narrative. Here's Eve:

First she had to find the language for loss. God hadn't given that. "This is good," God said. "And this is good. And over there is forbidden."

That was all.

None of the animals died. Nothing disappeared. Nothing was lost. Adam came back to their nest in the grass every night. So how could she speak of it when it happened? There were pleasant days and nights, and sweet smells, the friendliness of all the Garden's creatures, the late-afternoon visits from God, the sense of everything belonging with everything, nothing left out and no one lonely.

Suddenly, the whole world was gone.

In her travels, her exile, she picked up phrases. From Yiddish: Vos geven iz geven, iz mer nishto. *"What was, was, and is no more." From French:* Où sont les neiges d'antan? *"Where are the snows of yesteryear?"*

For a long time Eve ran around the world, pleading her own case, like a defendant without a lawyer.

"What did I do?" she asked. "Was it so terrible? Really, what did I do"? There was the tree. Everything was beautiful and good in the Garden. God said so, too. There was my own intelligence, and that was also good. The snake was someone I respected. Why should I set myself up against the advice of a neighbor?

"You see how innocent we all were? Adam at first tried to mate with a goldfish. Abraham didn't know which part of himself to circumcise. Cain didn't know how to kill his brother.

"We were all innocent!"

•The Five Books of Miriam: A Woman's Commentary on the Torah by Ellen Frankel, Ph.D. (Grosset/Putnam, 1996, $30.00). An extremely well-crafted exploration of the Torah from the perspective of women. But not just any women. Frankel invents and names a cast of women (*e.g.* Hulda the Preacher) among other rabbis, modern-day feminist heroes, mothers, daughters and *bubbes*. These characters are brought together to question, discuss and illuminate the text, each with her own perspective and way of seeing the world.

•Genesis: The Beginning of Desire by Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg (Jewish Publication Society, 1995, $34.95). A brilliant literary scholar, Zornberg draws on modern philosophy, psychology and art, as well as traditional commentaries such as Rashi and Rambam, textured to create an understanding of character and plot development in the human and divine relationships of Genesis. Zornberg, a professor at several yeshivas in Israel, also appears in the PBS special.

•In the Image of God: A Femini Commentary on the Torah by Judith Antonelli (Jason Aronson, 1995 Though this book calls itself a "fem nist commentary," unfortunately, it is misnomer. Antonelli has nothing bu scorn for Jewish feminists (often quot ing them from LILITH). She also ha choice words for other Jewish wome who have become alienated fro Judaism "*simply* because they have ha Jewish fathers who were sexist, dom neering, or even physically and/or sex ually abusive" (our italics). For man this collection of explanations on th Torah will be frustrating, but migh spark some interesting discussions.

•In the Beginning: A New Interpre tation of Genesis by Karen Armstron (Knopf, 1996, $20.00).The author the best-selling *A History of God*, wh also participated in the Genesis telev sion series, delves into the lives of man biblical heroines as well as giving a hi torical perspective to the Bible.

•Reading the Book: Making the Bible Timeless Text by Burton L. Visotz (Schocken, 1996, $13.00). "In the goo old days the good ol' boys read midra and scripture in a rather exclusive clu (no women, thank you)," writ Visotzky, the rabbi whose discussio at the Jewish Theological Semina were the precursors to the TV series. This book, however, is not only a collection of traditional *midrashim* but also Visotzky's explanation and, even, *midrashim* on thei *midrashim*. Visotzky is also the author of *The Genesis of Ethics: How the Tormented Family Genesis Leads Us to Moral Developm* (Crown, 1996, $20.00). This book co centrates on the moral lessons to learned from various *parshiyot* Genesis.

•Wrestling with Angels: What the Fi Family of Genesis Teaches Us abo Our Spiritual Identity, Sexuality, a Personal Relationships by Naomi Rosenblatt and Joshua Horow (Delacorte, 1995, $12.95). The autho a psychotherapist and a teacher respe tively, are wrestling with more th angels! They claim "the Bible clea

(continued on page

UDAPEST DIARY: N SEARCH OF THE MOTHERBOOK

y Susan Rubin Suleiman

niversity of Nebraska Press, $25

n Hungarian, the word "mother-ook," *anyakonyv*, is anything but oetic in its meaning. It is the official ook of records—birth certificates, narriage licenses, death certificates. ut when Susan Rubin Suleiman, a rofessor of French at Harvard Jniversity known for both her literary nd feminist writings, returns in earch of the motherbook"—to the omeland she left at age ten, it is more nan just paper she seeks.

"This is the story: survival, adaptation, luck. And never —almost never— looking back."

More than papers—which she does ind—the author is seeking comfort in he land from which she had been stranged. Displaced from the city to he Hungarian countryside by Hitler's hreat, Suleiman's family remained aithful to their dreams of a life in Hungary until after the war, when Communism reared its anti-Semitic head. Late one night in 1949, they fled to America.

Returning more than four decades later, the very American Suleiman confronts the people she meets about the topics that have become her mainstays—feminism and Judaism among them. And she finds that in a country that has suffered under Nazism and Communism, such subjects are often met with skepticism. They have become luxuries.

Around a heavy dose of dry and impersonal observations, the book, in the form of a daily dairy, opens and closes with beautiful descriptions of a refugee's jouney: "This is the story: survival, adaptation, luck. And never—almost never—looking back. What this has cost me, I am only now beginning to tally: abandoned friendships, lost loves, walls built around a solitude so deep that even motherhood cannot fully breach it." This story must speak to those all who have fled and who have ever dreamed of a return.

—Sarah Blustain

GENDER EQUALITY AND AMERICAN JEWS

by Moshe Hartman and Harriet Hartman

State University of New York Press, $24.95, paper

When the Council of Jewish Federations released its National Jewish Population Survey in 1990, the number seized upon by the press and the pulpit was the high percentage of Jews who marry non-Jews. Now social scientists have had a chance to analyze other aspects of the data from the NJPS, and we're being treated to some subtler findings, including statistics on how the lives of Jewish women and Jewish men compare in education, occupational achievement and Jewish involvement. The Hartmans tell us, in prose and tables not intended for popular consumption, that being Jewish does not directly limit women's equality in marriage; it's just that "the more Jewishly involved is the couple, the more they will be responsive to family obligations and curtail the wife's labor force participation while the children are young." This may result in her having a less rewarding career than he has.

Still, Jewish women appear to end up in more egalitarian partnerships—at least when the demographers measure certain externals that can be quantified, such as number of years of education—than their non-Jewish peers. We have here the bar graphs and multiple regression analyses to announce the differences between Jewish women and men in education (not much), occupational achievement (Jewish men have higher-prestige jobs and higher incomes than Jewish women because they don't take time out to raise children) and levels of secular involvement.

In order to have a more nearly equal pattern of what the Hartmans term "secular achievement" you'd better time your children so as to engender "less role conflict between the family and [women's] roles in the economy." No surprises there. But the authors say they themselves were surprised to find no evidence, when they examined Jewish and secular involvements of women and men, that "Jewishness encouraged gender inequality between spouses. . . . [O]n the contrary, some of the strongest evidence of gender equality within couples was found among the Orthodox."

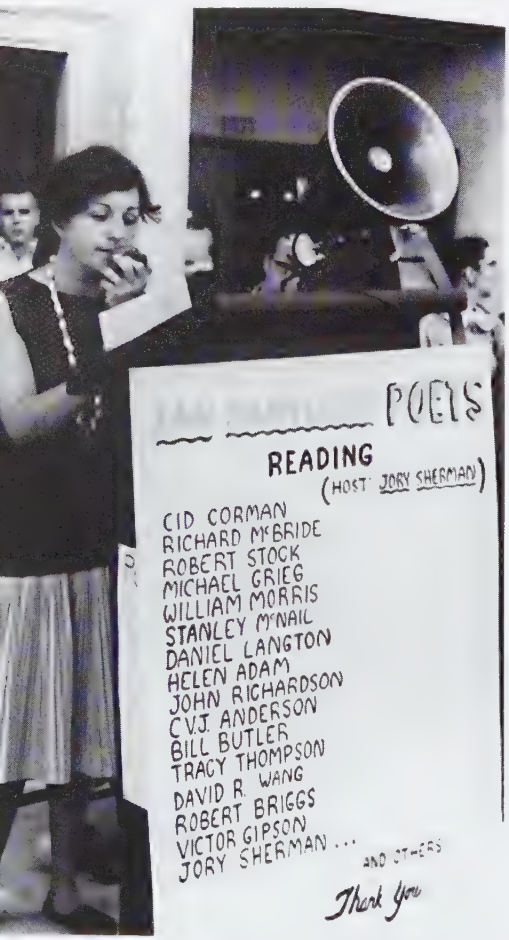
Because this work presents the data without the nuances and textures of women's life experiences, a statement that "although Jewish women's achievements do not equal Jewish men's achievements, they come closer to gender equality in terms of labor force activity and occupational achievement than men and women in the wider American population" doesn't tell us as much as we'd like to know. We can be grateful, however, for the policy recommendation in the concluding chapter: "[T]aking a cue from the strong leadership roles played by Jewish women in the movement toward secular equality, Jewish formal organizations should find ways to attract women not only as auxiliary members alongside overwhelmingly male leadership but as leaders and managers of strong communal organizations." Let's hope that those who sit on nominating committees in Jewish organizations, and those responsible for hiring and promoting women in Jewish communal jobs, read this far in the book.

—Susan Weidman Schneider

WOMEN OF THE BEAT GENERATION: THE WITERS, ARTISTS, AND MUSES AT THE HEART OF THE REVOLUTION
edited by Brenda Knight

Conari Press, Berkeley, CA, $19.95

This refreshing book revives the women who were at the center of the Beat movement but were concealed in the long shadows of their male counterparts. This is a collecion of fascinating biographical essays, photos, poetry and prose (some previously unpublished) of 40 unique women who



Beat poet ruth weiss reading at the Grant Street Fair, San Francisco, 1960

"turn[ed] their backs on 'the good life' the fifties promised" to work toward the fulfillment of their own rebellious, creative lives. Thse women, editor Brenda Knight suggests, "were feminist before the word was coined."

Several of these women were Jewish (Aya Tarlow, Lenore Kandel, Helen Hinkle, Barbara Guest, Jane Bowles, Denise Levertov, Elise Cowen, Hettie Jones and ruth weiss) but only a few were identified as such—both in the book and in their own lives. Hettie Jones left behind her childhood as "a white Jewish girl on Long Island" to marry black writer and revolutionary LeRoi Jones. And ruth weiss, who wrote of her chilling childhood escape from the Nazis in Austria, went on to to make a name for herself in the Beat music scene for her success in evoking jazz through words. This book gives rightful places to influential Beat women alongside Timothy Leary, Jack Kerouac and Alan Ginsburg, who by now need no introduction.

—Amy Greenstein

THE NOVICE INSOMNIAC
by Emily Warn

Copper Canyon Press, Port Townsend, WA, $12

Emily Warn's second volume of poetry, *The Novice Insomniac*, integrates Jewish themes, personal memories and a formidable engagement with the natural world. Her poems' rich textures stem from images of vegetation, roots and flowers, which reflect the multi-colored emotions of characters as they travel on their personal journeys.

In a section entitled "The House of Esther," Warn draws upon the biblical Queen Esther and a host of contemporary counterparts, summoned to celebrate each woman's heroic history. Many of the poems define the struggle of Jewish women to celebrate their religious identity while confronting a ubiquitous male presence within their tradition. The narrator of "Procession" boisterously proclaims her durability in the face of constricting male ideologies: "Give up on me God. Pick me and distill me and turn me into wine. Get drunk on me God, because I'll last and last."

In "Sounding the Good Name," "Esther" becomes a term that encompasses heirs of the ancient queen—women who discover spiritual outlets, who "turned toward the god of the stars for a spell." "Esther" echoes of courageous women, of Esther (Etty) Hillesum, sent unbroken to the death camps. The name also resounds of spiritual connection to the land; it is "[s]houted . . . under the desert stars with horns, noisemakers . . . ."

The inclusion of plant and animal life in delicate emotional spaces gener ates vitality in Warn's work. In this lus cious volume, Warn overlaps persona recollections with Jewish culture, mea suring the power of nature to inscrib itself into our collective and persona experiences.

—Heather Tenze

NICE JEWISH GIRLS: GROWING UP IN AMERICA
edited by Marlene Adler Marks

Penguin Books, $12.95

Marlene Adler Marks may have intend ed irony in the title of her new antholo gy of fiction, poetry and memoirs abou the Jewish-American-female experi ence, but the disappointing truth is tha the girls described in these pages reall are "nice."

They're not nice in the crossed-leg lowered-voice sense. They have sexuali ty and anger and rebellion. But the writ ers' reverence for the archetypal *bubbe*— described with child-like, wide-eye nostalgia—takes the edge off many c these pieces.

It fact, so dominant is the *bubbe* in th consciousness of some of America most accomplished Jewish women writ ers and a whole cast of lesser-known they seem unable to craft a identities fc themselves that are at once modern Jewish *and* female. The painful realiz tion in these pages is how concentrate was the Jewish past, and how dilute th Jewish present.

—S.A

BITTER SCENT: THE CASE OF L'ORÉAL, NAZIS, AND THE ARAB BOYCOTT
by Michael Bar-Zohar

Dutton, $23.95

Once Jean Frydman, a Jew, held high-ranking position on the board o the multi-million dollar cosmetic company L'Oréal. Then the Ara Boycott Bureau—adamant that mer chandisers doing business in Ara lands sever all ties with Israel—pre sured L'Oréal to oust him. Asked t resign, Frydman charged L'Oréal wit racial discrimination, and the leg battles that ensued revealed L'Oréal long history of anti-Semitic affili tions, not only with Arabs but with th

Photograph by C.R. Sny

IN MEMORY'S KITCHEN: A LEGACY FROM THE WOMEN OF TEREZÍN

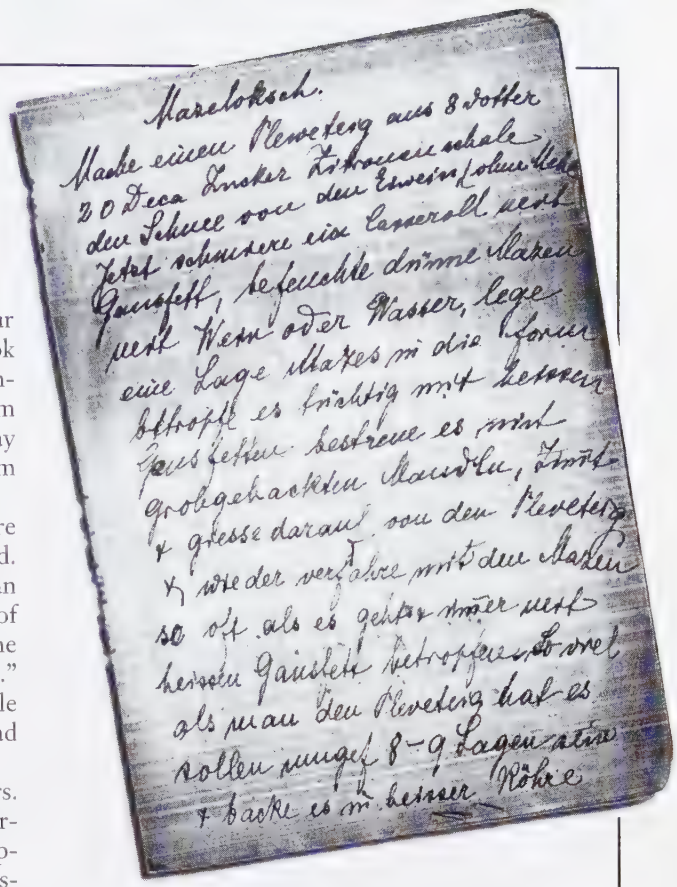
edited by Cara De Silva
translated by Bianca Steiner Brown
foreword by Michael Berenbaum
Jason Aronson Inc., Northvale, N.J., $25

Reading "In Memory's Kitchen," you almost feel crumbling in your hands the pages of the original manuscript—a makeshift cookbook scribbled on scraps of paper by women incarcerated at the Nazi concentration camp of Terezín. The book traveled for decades, from Czechoslovakia to Israel and then to America, until it found its way to the daughter of Mina, who had collected these recipes from starved before she died in the camp.

This book gives voice to the elite, assimilated Jews who were taken to Terezín and who hoped—indeed expected—to be released. In her introduction to the book of pictures and recipes (in German with English translations), De Silva writes of the constant talk of food in the camp, of the psychological necessity to "quell the hungers of the soul." "'We called it "cooking with the mouth." Everybody did it,'" she quotes one survivor as saying. "'And people got very upset if they thought you made a dish the wrong way or had the wrong recipe for it.'"

There are no crematoria here, no corpses or torture chambers. This is the story of our kin, determined to maintain a vestige of normal life. In its reference to small details of normalcy, this heart-stopping document gives human-sized presence to the monumental disaster of the Holocaust.

—S.B.


Mazeloksch.

Recipe for Mazeloksch, from *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy From the Women of Terezín.*

Nazis as well.

In this book, journalist Michael Bar-Zohar recounts Frydman's investigation into the events surrounding his resignation. Hidden in the stacks of French libraries and bookstores, Frydman discovered the secret Nazi past of three L'Oréal officials and one French president, François Mitterand, who engaged in activities ranging from furnishing the Nazis with weapons to generating anti-Semitic propaganda.

Frydman declared to the press, "I am not fighting a company or its products, I am fighting the men who own it. L'Oréal's products are not Nazi products. I have nothing against L'Oréal, the fine cosmetics company. My struggle is against the parallel L'Oréal, the one that became a safe haven for Nazi criminals and yielded to the boycott." These troubling remarks, which Bar-Zohar reports without comment, are symptomatic of a split consciousness: one Frydman who perceives the inherent racism of L'Oréal as abhorrent, and a parallel Frydman whose protective instincts for his former workplace were not dulled by its acts of betrayal.

—H.T.

TAKING JUDAISM PERSONALLY
by Judy Petsonk
The Free Press, $25

In this anecdotal and intimate history of the last 30 years of the Jewish renewal movement in the United States, Judy Petsonk describes the ways many previously disconnected Jews have refuelled their spiritual lives. The Havurah, where Jews associate together informally in small groups to *daven*, study and celebrate, has proved so successful an antidote to large, impersonal synagogues that many synagogues themselves have adapted the concept. More radically, the Jewish feminist movement brought the ritual enfranchisement of women, enriched the language of liturgy to include women and feminine attributes of God, and created new life-cycle rituals, among them baby girl namings, adult bat mitzvah celebrations and Rosh Hodesh groups. An eclectic attitude rediscovered mystical and meditation traditions in Judaism and incorporated aspects from other traditions such as Buddhism and Yoga that have been a magnet for Jews. An expansion of the concept of *kashrut* to include ecologically responsible behavior, and the acceptance of gay and lesbian relationships within the Jewish community demonstrate a commitment to reinterpreting Judaism to meet new social and political challenges.

The book lists readings, teachers and organizations and encourages an do-it-yourself approach to creating a Jewish community. It also provides sometimes too personal accounts of the lives of the many familiar feminist who made the current renewal happen. In this friendly account, Petsonk documents that for all our assimilation into American society, some members of our self-absorbed baby boom generation (who seem to think they've discovered everything for the first time)—tried ancient but evolving Judaism on and found it a comfortable protective garment, with room to grow in.

—N.D.

THE FAMILY MARKOWITZ
by Allegra Goodman
Farrar, Straus, Giroux, $22

Imagine your favorite, comfy chair. Then cover it in a clear, protective plastic.

That is the image of family nurturance that Allegra Goodman describes

in her new work of fiction, and it is the illustration that graces the book's cover. It is a collection of stories about the members of one good family who have lost contact with each other and with the love that should have bound them.

The characters in this book break no stereotypes; they reinforce them. Goodman's magic in describing three generations of a Jewish family—immigrants and their descendants—is to pu into relief the familiar but subtle way in which their love is worn away by neurosis, guilt, assimilation, rootless ness and a host of other conflicts.

In Rose Goodman she draws the familiar matriarch, for years a dutifu wife and mother, now a demanding widow. Her prominent academic son Ed, who is at the center of the drama suffers small crises every time hi mother—or anyone else—breaks into his carefully constructed cocoon Compensating for him is his wife Sara a creative and intelligent woman who abandoned a literary career to be care taker for her family.

The Family Markowitz does not tak you beyond your own back yard Rather, it burrows deep into that satu rated dirt, unearthing ghosts—both funny and sad—that you might hav thought buried long ago.

—*S.E*

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LOVE INVENTS US
by Amy Bloom
Random House, $21

At last, a truly Jewish writer who ha found her way out of the ghetto. Am Bloom's coming-of-age novel echoes th cadences and concerns of an older Jewis immigrant population but speaks in voice that is overtly modern. Like Carso McCullers' *Member of the Wedding*, i explodes with a young woman's discover of her own multiple new selves.

The story—parts of which hav appeared in the New Yorker and i *Nice Jewish Girls* (reviewed above)— follows a young girl through her dis covery of love. The book traces he maturation through her relationship with a diverse cast of characters: Jewish furrier, an English teacher wh seduces her at age 16, an elderly blac Southern women from whom sh steals teaspoons, and a black boy wit whom she shares a highly sexual rela tionship until his parents find out an send him away.

The love Bloom describes, without hint of sentimentality, is a complicate and often dysfunctional experienc holding at once the promise of salva tion and destruction. Her character throw themselves into it with a ferocit that ensures both.

—*S.M*

Mother as Matrix

GHOST STORIES
by E.M. Broner

Global City Press, New York, $12, paper

Ghost Stories is the most recent book by noted Jewish feminist author E.M. Broner, and it is as satisfying as we have come to expect from her. This collection of short stories delves into the relationship between a woman and her dying mother. But this is not a book about pain and anger, and it is not about eulogizing the perfect mother. These are stories about the bond between an imperfect mother and her imperfect daughter, a bond that transcends death.

The stories begin as the mother is approaching death and Leila, the daughter, begins to realize how much maternal wisdom she has yet to absorb. It is not until Leila begins going to synagogue every Shabbat to say *Kaddish* for her mother that—in scenes of magical realism—the two finally begin to communicate. The 11 months that Leila sits and "talks" with her mother in synagogue gives her mother a chance to intercede on behalf of her own memory.

One of the most remarkable things about this book is Broner's ability to weave humor into a story about grieving. No offense could be taken, for instance, in Broner's portrayal, in Leila's voice, of the *Kaddish*: "As we begin preparing for the Mourner's Prayer, she's already pushing me out of my seat. 'Don't be the last to rise!' she says. 'It makes a bad impression.'"

Ghost Stories is an incredible collection of love stories, memoirs not of a super-mother but of a mother, warts and all.

—*Natalie Blitt*

WRITING MOTHERS, WRITING DAUGHTERS: TRACING THE MATERNAL IN STORIES BY AMERICAN JEWISH WOMEN
by Janet Handler Burstein

University of Illinois Press, $34.95, cloth, $14.95, paper

Under a cloak of academic analysis, Janet Handler Burstein has worked out a complex understanding of the relationships between Jewish American mothers and daughters. On one level, this is a discussion of the writings of Jewish American women writers—from the immigrant generations of Mary Antin and Anzia Yezierska to contemporary writers like E.M. Broner, Erica Jong and Adrienne Rich. Along the way, Burstein also manages to create a maturational prototype specific to the Jewish American woman.

Though the ostensible subject of this book is literature, Burstein's text is overlaid with the language of both psychotherapeutic and feminist theory. Burstein positions all the writers as "daughters" and sets them in relief against their mothers' experiences. They grow up in sections called "Leaving Home and Mother"; "Centering the Devalued Mother"; "Mirroring the Mother: The Ordeal of Narcissism"; and "Restorying the Jewish Woman." She is describing a complete cycle of dependence, growth and self-discovery.

In one telling passage, Burstein explains that she has not differentiated in her analysis between fiction and autobiography. And in her introduction Burstein connects the inspiration for this book to her own efforts at understanding her mother's ambivalent relationship to a religion that would oblige her participation yet deny her equal status. No matter how often she tries to retreat into the language of the academy, her personal voice is never silent. Daughters, she writes at the end of her book, "have learned to hear beneath a mother's certainties the courage of her confusions. No longer her translator or her mirror, they know that however distinctively they speak themselves they are also carrying forth her story." The reader is rewarded with the recognition that this narrative is not only the story of the women we read, but also of the author and the reader as well.

—*S.B.*

FRUITFUL: A REAL MOTHER IN THE MODERN WORLD
by Anne Roiphe

Houghton Mifflin, $22.95

In her new book, Anne Roiphe, author of *Up the Sandbox*, *Lovingkindness* and *A Season for Healing: Reflections on the Holocaust*, makes a passionate case for feminists to wrest the championship of motherhood away from the Christian Coalition. In this thoughtful account, Roiphe traces her own life as a child of unhappily married parents, a young divorced mother, a stepmother, a mother again, and eventually a grandmother. Feminists, she says, need to go beyond blaming men to ensure a fundamental change in our families, so that fathers care for their children equally with mothers and both reap the glories as well as the agonies of nurturing.

—*N.D.*

A QUESTION OF BALANCE: ARTISTS AND WRITERS ON MOTHERHOOD
by Judith Pierce Rosenberg

Papier Mâché Press, Watsonville, CA, $19.95

When her kids were small, Alicia Ostriker wrote everywhere: sitting on a bus, on the living room sofa, in bed; even, she says, while she was driving. Mary Morris makes outer order before creatively approaching her inner disorder, undertaking a ritual, Bhuddist-style "cleaning of the temple" in order to disengage from the details of family life. Perri Klass drinks three cups of tea late at night, when the rest of her family is sleeping, to get started again. And Kate Braverman had to force herself not to burn the midnight oil at her typewriter—as a single parent she had to be up the next morning to take care of her child. Advises Rosellen Brown to any woman who is trying to parent and write simultaneously: make sure your life-partner knows how important your writing is to you. A bibliography is included with Rosenberg's portraits of 25 artists and writers and their struggle to have it all.

—*N.D.*

The Banana and the Condom:
A True-Life Tale From Russia

From her rustic kitchen in the small town of Povarovka, an hour outside Moscow, Svetlana Yakimenko discusses Project Kesher's recent decision to make sex education and the dissemination of women's health information a new focus in its work with Jewish women in the Former Soviet Union.

Yakimenko is the director of operations in the Former Soviet Union for Kesher, an organization dedicated to developing leadership among Jewish women that was begun in 1989 by Chicago feminist and peace activist Sallie Gratch. The two women met during a peace march in the Soviet Union at a time when Gratch was hoping to bring Jewish women together in the FSU and Yakimenko had only an "intellectual interest" in Judaism, having been raised to look on religion as "believing in fairy tales, Father Frost and Christmas."

It was at a Shabbat celebration during the nighttime peace march in the middle of a field that Yakimenko, a soft-spoken mother of two, first felt the powerful pull "of being part of a community." She began to accompany Gratch throughout Ukraine—the beginnings of Project Kesher—during which time Yakimenko was shocked by the hunger many Jews felt for Judaism.

Today, Yakimenko says, women in the FSU are similarly desirous, indeed greedy, for information on their health, sexuality and other intertwined emotional issues, such as coping with marital conflict, alcoholism in the home, and stress. At a conference this summer in Ukraine, Project Kesher made available recent Russian translations of the classic American feminist text on women's health, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*; some women waited three days to get their hands on a copy.

The facts explain why. In the FSU today, information available on women's health issues in general is paltry; most women have never heard about breast self-examinations, and it is next to impossible to find any materials about menopause. Abortions are the most common form of birth control, and the FSU states rank highest in the world in rates of abor tion. Most women have neither knowledge of—nor acces to—other forms of birth control. A 1995 report provided b the United Nations noted that in the Russian federation 57% of women ages 15-49 did not use any contraceptiv method and 6% knew nothing about contraception. Th same report noted that in 1992 the only two condom facto ries in the Russian federation ceased production, as the could no longer afford to import latex.

Childbirth for these women is often a nightmarish ordeal—undertaken with no anesthesia, one doctor for ever three to six women, an open room with no curtains and n family members present to offer support.

Project Kesher's director, Karyn Gershon, recalls the dis belief in one audience as she described her experience c childbirth in an American hospital with her own private doc tor and her husband by her side. "If I didn't trust you already," one woman exclaimed, "I would think you were feeding u American propaganda."

For women also exploring *halacha* (Jewish law)—banne under Communist doctrine—questions about birth control ca be complicated by the grow ing presence of Orthodo rabbis, Gershon explain She recalls a woman wh said her rabbi had tol women that Jewish law for bids the use of birth contro "That is one perspective o Jewish faith, but there is whole spectrum of Jewis faith in which birth control considered very acceptable says Gershon.

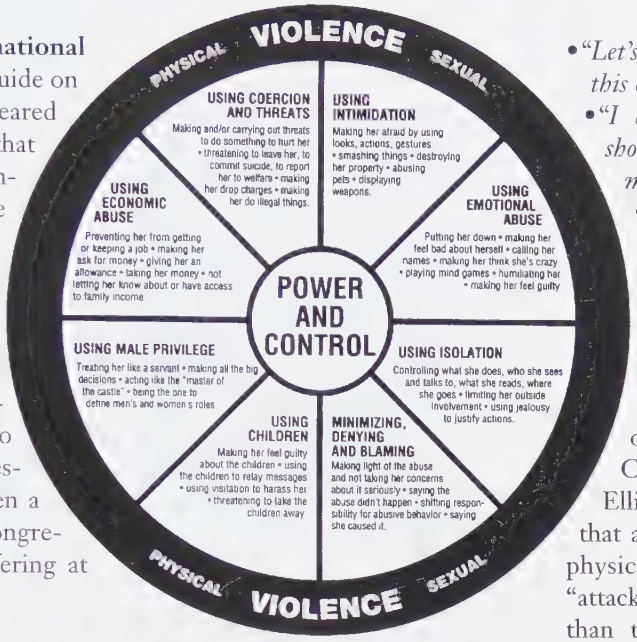
With this in mind, th past summer's Kesher's con ference in Ukraine—whic drew women from across th Former Soviet Union— women began discussin ways to grapple with dome tic violence and alcoholis in their homes and commu nities. They discussed th possibility of writing articl for their local papers on th subjects. They talked abou simple ways to impro health services. If they sew curtains themselves, or woman wondered, woul they be able to convince th

Russian mother and daughte attend the first Project Kesher conference.

Photograph © 1996 Joan R

Your Words Have Weight

Jewish Women International has released a resource guide on domestic abuse. It is geared toward rabbis, but has much that may be helpful to anyone confronted with violence in the home. The guide includes true stories about how rabbis have helped—and hindered—battered Jewish women; sample sermons; texts for study; flyers; a list of reading materials and resources. It also includes the following suggestions for how to respond when a family member, friend or congregant confides that she is suffering at the hands of her husband.


VIOLENCE
PHYSICAL
SEXUAL
USING COERCION AND THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her • threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare • making her drop charges • making her do illegal things.
USING INTIMIDATION
Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures • smashing things • destroying her property • abusing pets • displaying weapons.
USING ECONOMIC ABUSE
Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income
USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down • making her feel bad about herself • calling her names • making her think she's crazy • playing mind games • humiliating her • making her feel guilty
POWER AND CONTROL
USING MALE PRIVILEGE
Treating her like a servant • making all the big decisions • acting like the "master of the castle" • being the one to define men's and women's roles
USING ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes • limiting her outside involvement • using jealousy to justify actions.
USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty about the children • using the children to relay messages • using visitation to harass her • threatening to take the children away
MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING
Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously • saying the abuse didn't happen • shifting responsibility for abusive behavior • saying she caused it.
PHYSICAL
SEXUAL
VIOLENCE

DO SAY:

- *"You seem upset. What's troubling you?"*
- *"I believe you."*
- *"I wish I could tell you that this is rare. Many other women have experienced this, too."*
- *"I care about your well-being and I'm concerned for your safety."*
- *"You're a brave person."*
- *"If you need me, I am here."*
- *"I won't tell anyone unless you want me to."*
- *"Tell me about the first time it happened."*
- *"It's important that you are safe. Do you have a place to go if you need to leave?"*
- *"In 95% of the cases, if he hits you once, he will hit you again."*
- *"You need more help than I can give you."*

DON'T SAY:

- *"What did you do to provoke him?"*
- *"Here's what you should do next."*
- *"Why don't you and your husband get some counseling." (Domestic violence is not a couples issue.)*
- *"Let's bring your husband in to work this out."*
- *"I can't believe that!!" (Showing shock promotes isolation, embarrassment and shame.)*
- *"If I were you I wouldn't stay a minute longer."*
- *"Why don't you go home and work this out?"*

And in the Fall 1996 issue of *Review* magazine, a publication of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Rabbi Elliot Dorf alerts us to the concept that abuse may be verbal as well as physical. Verbal abuse, he writes, "attacks the person him/herself rather than that person's actions, employs words which are understood by everyone who hears them (even if not the victim him/herself) as derogatory, and is repeated often and in situations which do not call for such negativity. This is forbidden in our tradition as *ona'at devarim* (oppression by means of words)." Words do have weight.

For more information, contact the Outreach Division of Jewish Women International, 1828 L Street, NW, Suite 250, Washington, DC 20036; phone (202) 857-1300; or fax (202) 857-1380.

loctors to hang them around the hospital beds so that women could have privacy during delivery.

Also at the conference, each woman eceived a rape whistle and a packet of naterial on women's health. Included vas information on examining one's own breasts for cancer and reducing ain during menstruation. Yakimenko ays she hesitated before adding information on women's masturbation—she ad heard it described before as "some errible thing"—but decided ultimately o include it.

Despite the progress, Yakimenko oncedes, there are still strong cultural arriers that must be confronted in disseminating the information—among them a Soviet mindset that considers public discussion of sexual issues proscribed.

Gershon describes the wall of reserve she encountered during Project Kesher's first conference, in 1994, when she tried to discuss condoms with some of the women. They weren't angry, she remembers, "they were just distant. . . . They looked at me like I was nuts."

Today, however, Gershon says that "cultural barriers are dropping." And, indeed, it was a condom and an overripe banana that proved the highlight of last summer's conference. When American activist Myrna Balk rose to demonstrate how to put on a condom, she used the fruit as a stand-in. All it took was a little squeeze for the overripe banana to mimic reality and explode. "That was so exciting," laughs Yakimenko. "The women really understood what was happening."

—Rachel Blustain

Project Kesher will hold its next conference for women in the Ukraine in the summer of 1997. To find out more, write to Project Kesher, 1134 Judson Ave., Evanston, IL 60202; call (847) 332-1994; fax to (847)332-2134; or e-mail to 74771.142 @compuserve.com

Media Watch: What the World Sees in "The Nanny"

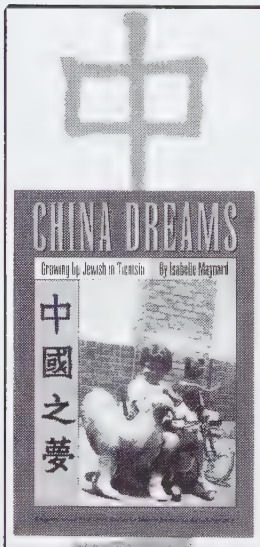
New television season—any new Jewish women on the tube? So far there's only one explicitly Jewish woman and she's an ancillary, if fully drawn character. *Relativity* (on ABC), produced by the same folks who brought us *thirtysomething* and *My So-Called Life*—Marshall Herskovitz and Edward Zwick with Jason Katims—charts a couple's romance from love at first sight through wrangling with their families as the relationship develops. The Jewish dysfunctional family belongs to Leo Roth, the working-class lead; his older sister Rhonda (played by Lisa Epstein) is a lesbian recovering from their mother's death and the breakup of a long-term relationship. While given to dramatic histrionics, Rhonda is notable for being a sympathetic mensch who is "really trying to be the mommy here" for her father and younger brothers, as well as being the only one nice to Leo's new wealthy Gentile (of course) girlfriend.

Rhonda Roth is not the only non-heterosexual Jewish woman on a television series. The syndicated science fiction adventure series *Babylon 5*, written by creator Joe Michael Straczynski, going into its fourth season in the 2250's A.D., has the lovely Russian Jewish commander Susan Ivanova (played by Claudia Christian). While Susa has met up with at least one male ex-lover on the space sta tion, she has rebuffed the flirtations of the dashing range Marcus Cole, and has spent an intimat night with a woman.

But the Jewish woman on TV today wit the highest ratings is a caricature, *Th Nanny*. Executive producer and star Fra Drescher is a whiny, manipulative clothes horse hunting rich (non-Jewish) men bl projecting a nonthreatening ditziness. A h for CBS, the Nanny has the whole worl laughing at her. The first thing m Australian e-mail pal asked me when sh found out I was a Jewish woman fro Queens was, "Do you talk like *The Nanny*?

The Jewish Museum in New York City currently exhibiting a roundup of vide clips "From Molly Goldberg to Jerr Seinfeld: Jewish Women and Men o American TV" to demonstrate that telev sion is the medium that most influences th images "majority culture" Americans have of Jews. In 199 Jewish women on TV are barely two small steps ahead wit one giant step behind.

– *Nora Lee Mana*



China Dreams

Growing Up
Jewish in Tientsin

BY ISABELLE MAYNARD

"Lyrical memories of an unusual childhood." —*Kirkus Reviews*

An "evocative memoir, steeped in sensory detail . . . The author's intimate and powerful voice offers an absorbing glimpse into the consciousness of a young girl as well as into one of the many insulated, self-sufficient Jewish communities that existed around the world."
—*Publishers Weekly*

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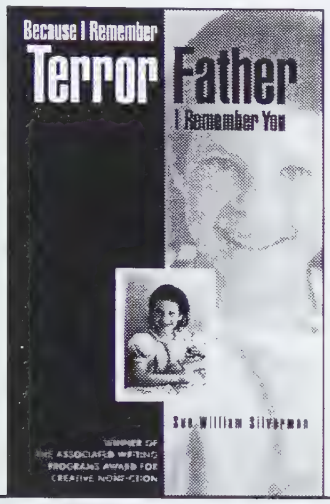

Because I Remember Terror, Father, I Remember You

Sue William Silverman

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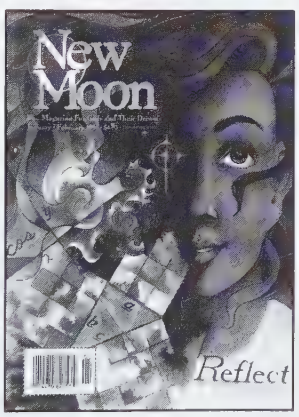

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(continued from page 32)

espouses many sexist attitudes toward women" and at the same time assert that the Bible offers a "basic affirmation of gender equality." Rosenblatt leads seminars on the Bible for Washington politicos and is also a participant in the Genesis series.

•***Our Fathers' Wells*** by Peter Pitzele (Harper Collins, 1995, $12.00). Pitzele, a psychodramatist creates a long *midrash* that follows the story of Genesis and draws on the relationships among men in his own family for insights into male relationships in the Bible. An interesting exploration of the emotional landscape of the Torah.

•***Talking about Genesis: A Resource Guide***, Public Affairs Television (Doubleday, 1996). A fascinating collection of short essays by Jews, Christians and Muslims all on the topic of Genesis. The collection also contains sample questions and discussion topics for your group to ponder. ***Genesis: A Living Conversation*** by Bill Moyers (Doubleday, 1996, $29.95). Transcripts from the PBS television series hosted by the author.

•***Talking with Eve Leah Hagar Miriam: Poems*** by Helen Papell (Jewish Women's Resource Center, 1996, $6.00). These four women of Genesis are the taking-off point for contemporary musings. Among the poems under "Hagar" are "The Vietnam Wall" and "Carrie Nation at the South Street Seaport."

•***The Torah: The Five Books of Moses. Translation of the Holy Scriptures*** (Jewish Publication Society, 1996, $15.95). A new English translation of the Hebrew Bible.

•In conjunction with the PBS television series "Genesis: A Living Conversation," LILITH has collected the articles on Biblical women that have appeared in the magazine over the years. You can order **"Meet the Matriarchs"** by sending $12 to LILITH, Suite 2432, 250 West 57 St., New York NY 10107.

– compiled by Natalie Blitt and Heather Tenzer

ON CAMPUS

A National Conference on Judaism and Feminism for college and university students of all religious backgrounds will be held March 27-30 at Yale Unversity. Biblical scholar Aviva Zornberg will be the keynote speaker in a program of seminars, lectures and interactive workshops on issues facing a new generation of Jewish women. How does our Judaism differ from that of our mothers? How do we see ourselves united as Jewish women? Contact *Sara Meirowitz, (203)436-1732; saram@pantheon.yale.edu*

Celebrate Jewish Women's History Week, March 2-9. Ma'yan and the Jewish Women's Archive have developed posters to stimulate interest in the history and achievement of Jewish women. Showcased are Glikl of Hameln, 17th century memoirist; Rose Schneiderman, labor organizer; and Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah. Posters, $10 each, 3 for $25, from *Ma'yan (212)580-0099;* for program ideas including a list of speakers from LILITH's Jewish Women's Talent Bank, contact *Jewish Women's Archive (617)232-2258.*

ORTHODOX FEMINISTS

The Women's Tefillah Network is on the Internet. You can chat with this community of Orthodox women who meet in as many as 30 groups in the United States, Canada, England, Australia and Israel. Join their listserve by sending a message to *majordomo@mbhs.bergtraum.k12.ny.us.* In the subject box write *new*, in the main text box write *subscribe wtn.* You can then write to their *davening* group members worldwide by using the followng address: *WTN@mbhs.bergtraum.k12.ny.us*

Feminism and Orthodoxy a conference to be held Feb. 16&17 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York, will feature Susan Aronoff, Bonnie Becker, Blu Greenberg, Rivka Haut, Batsheva Marcus, Leah Shakdiel and other speakers on such topics as *agunah*, family planning, head-covering, *mikveh*, *kol ishah*, life-cycle ceremonies, death, loss, mourning, *tallit* and *tefillin*, women in the Orthodox synagogue, Women at the Wall, *halachic* "windows of opportunity"—such as a woman reading the *ketuba* at a wedding or saying *kaddish*, Orthodox women and political power in comparison with religious women of other faiths. The program will include an evening of song, prayer sessions, talks by invited rabbis, and a dedication in memory of the late educator Judy Hurwich. Fee is $135 including meals for two days; $85 for one day. Contact conference coordinator *Esther Farber, 3333 Henry Hudson Pkwy., #11S, Riverdale, NY 10463; (718)601-3769; fax (718)543-8485.*

"It's Not Just About Trees, It's About Roots" is the motto of the Jewish National Fund's student program. Their looseleaf compendium *To Everything There Is a Time and a Season* contains ideas for planning events around the Jewish calendar with activities for responsible care of the environment, such as visiting a zoo and studying Torah texts on the treatment of animals. Free from *Aliza Kline, JNF on Campus, 42 E. 69th St., New York, NY 10021; (212)879-9300 x330, fax (212)517-3293; jnfoncampus@aol.com*

GO AND LEARN

She'arim is a 12-month integrated study course in Jewish texts and pedagogy for recent college graduates (female or male) considering Jewish education as a career. The nondenominational program awards an $18,000 stipend package and includes subsequent job placement and professional support. It shares the resources of Drisha Institute, Beit Rabban School, and the Beit Rabban Center for Research in Jewish Education. Program begins June 1997. Contact *Leslie Lautin, She'arim, 131 W. 86th St., New York, NY 10024; (212)595-0307; fax (212)595-0679; e-mail drisha@panix.com*

The New York Kollel, a center for adult Jewish study in a transdenominational, pluralistic, egalitarian environment, offers evening, day-time, lunch-time as well as Internet courses. Recent offerings of their Women's *Beit Midrash*: "Our Bodies Ourselves: Female Sexuality and Judaism" taught by Rabbi Dianne Cohler-Esses and "Ritual Waters: the Laws of Mikveh" with Rabbi Sarra Levine. *New York Kollel, Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion, 1 W. 4th St., New York, NY 10012-1186; (212)674-5300 http://www.huc.edu/kollel/*

ISRAEL PROGRAMS

Bronfman Youth Fellowships in Israel offers a summer in Israel to 26 Jewish teenagers entering 12th grade. Students from diverse religious backgrounds in the U.S. or Canada study, dialogue and travel in Israel and are inspired to future Jewish leadership. Candidates for this five-week program are selected on the basis of character, intellectual interests, special talents and leadership qualities. All costs are underwritten by the Samuel Bronfman Foundation. Half the "fellows" are usually female; the faculty has included Rabbi Sharon Cohen-Anisfeld of Yale Hillel and Regina Stein of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. Political and cultural leaders past groups have met include: MK's Yael Dayan, Naomi Chazan, Limor Livnat, and Jerusalem City Councilwoman Anat

loffman. Completed applitions must be postmarked y January 31. *The Bronfman outh Fellowships in Israel, 17 Yilbur St., Albany, NY 2202; (518)465-6575; fax (18)432-8984, e-mail FI@mcimail.com; webpage: ttp://www.bronfman.org/byfi*

The Dorot Fellowship in srael—to help build a knowledgeable and impasoned lay leadership for the Diaspora Jewish communi-y"—is open to college gradates in their 20's or 30's (but not open to persons already or definitely entering ewish professional careers"). ach "fellow" designs a yearong program in Israel to clude a summer ulpan, ourses in Jewish studies, a art-time internship, and nonthly Dorot seminars. ellowships include tuition nd a stipend of about 13,000. Apply by January 8 or the 1997-98 year. *Dorot ellowship in Israel, 439 enefit St., Providence, RI 2903; (401)351-8866; fax 401)351-4975; e-mail: fo@dorot.org*

emale applicants are ncouraged to apply to the nternational Olympiyeda combination of the words lympics and knowledge), a science talent competition now open to 9th and 10th grade English-speaking high school students in North America. Participants are selected based on a science aptitude test and an exam on study material. The program, based on the Technion campus in Haifa, aims to grow to 50 participants, including Spanish speakers, by 1998. The three week program (including transportation) is free to successful applicants. *American Friends of the Israel National Museum of Science, 511 Fifth Ave., 10th floor, New York, NY 10017; (212)578-1756.*

TRAVEL

Looking for an egalitarian synagogue in Paris? Pauline Bebe, ordained at the Leo Baeck College in England, is the first—and so far only—female rabbi in France. She leads the *Communauté Juive Liberale-Ile de France, 6, rue Pierre Ginier 75018 Paris, tel 01-42 93 03 44.* Their services are Friday evenings 6:45pm and Shabbat mornings at 10:30am. Also, a French Anglophone congregation with a trilingual service, (Friday evenings at 7:00pm and a monthly Shabbat morning at 10:30am) is led by Bebe's American-born, Jewish Theological Seminary ordained husband Tom Cohen. (They met while studying in Jerusalem.) *Kehilat Gesher, 10 rue de Pologne 78100 St. Germain-en-Laye; tel 01 39 21 97 19.* It is a good idea to call when you are on location to confirm. Ask also about a lunch and learn *"absorber et s'absorber"* Cohen teaches in French every Tuesday at *Restaurant Goldenberg, 69 avenue Wagram, Paris 75017* and every other Thursday at Kehilat Gesher (address and phone above) in English. E-mail Cohen for further information *75040.1426@ compuserve.com*

Kulanu (Hebrew for "all of us") is an organization dedicated to finding lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people such as the Shinlung communitiy in India and the Abayudaya in Uganda or *anusim* "marranos" in Brazil or Santa Fe. They provide these dispersed Jews with help in research, contacts, education, conversion when requested, and relocation to Israel if desired. This tax-exempt organization is supported by and comprised of volunteers who are Jews of varied backgrounds and practices. You can become a supporter and receive their newsletter Kulanu as well as advice on visiting these dispersed and isolated communities by sending $18 or more to *Kulanu, 1211 Ballard St., Silver Spring, MD 20910.*

HELPING HEALING

The Counseling Center for Women is Israel's only professional mental health center informed by a feminist perspective that "only women who feel strong within themselves will be able to achieve equality in their personal lives and promote social change in Israeli society." In Jerusalem and Ramat Gan, they offer individual, couple and group therapy, support groups for low-income women, assertiveness training, therapeutic groups for survivors of childhood incest and sexual abuse, support groups for immigrants from Ethiopia and the FSU. You can support their work by making a designated contribution to *The New Israel Fund, P.O. Box 91588, Washington, D.C. 20090-1588.*

Songs of Love is a nonprofit organization that creates personalized songs for children and teens who are chronically or terminally ill. Each patient receives a cassette of her/his own song, with original melody and

WEIDMAN SCHNEIDER

HYMAN

LISS-LEVINSON

RAPOPORT

LILITH Magazines 20th anniversary will be marked at a program, "20 Years of Jewish Feminism," January 28 at 8pm, featuring editor-in-chief Susan Weidman Schneider, as well as historian Paula Hyman, psychotherapist Nechama Liss-Levinson and novelist Nessa Rapoport at *New York's 92nd Street Y. For tickets: (212)996-1100.*

otographs: Weidman Schneider by Joan Roth; Paula Hyman by Michael Marsland; Nessa Rapoport by Mike Farnham

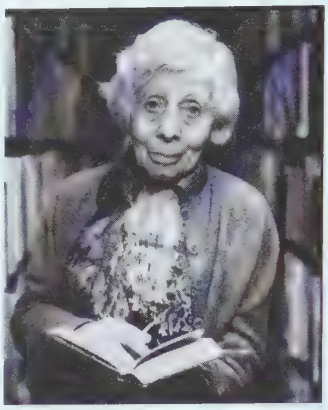
lyrics based on a profile submitted by hospital or family. There is no charge for this *mitzvahdik* service, started by a songwriter in memory of his twin brother, also a songwriter, who died in 1984. Financial support and the talents of songwriters and singers are welcome. *John Beltzer, Songs of Love, 108-12 65th Rd, Forest Hills, NY 11375, telfax (718)997-8482. e-mail songslove@aol.com*

FILM

To bring Anzia Yezierska to the screen—wanted: Jewish actresses, actors, and angels. Ongoing casting rehearsals are being conducted for a film version of the novel *Bread Givers*, about a young Jewish Russian immigrant daughter seeking independence from her Old World rabbi father in 1920's Lower East Side New York. Funds to complete this until-now independently financed, community-based production are also needed. Contact film writer/director *Victoria Sampson, (800)921-6213; VSampson@aol.com*

JOURNALS

Nashim, a Journal of Jewish Women's and Gender Studies will premiere in Spring 1997—in English and Hebrew—under the auspices of the Seminary of Judaic Studies of the Masorti (Conservative) movement in Israel. Editorial board members are Ze'ev Falk, David Golinkin, Renee Levine-Melammed, Einat Ramon, Susan Sered, Alice Shalvi and Deborah Weissman. The first issue will focus on



"Women and the Land of Israel," and the next on motherhood. Send papers "emerging from original research from within and across the various disciplines where women's and gender studies and Jewish studies overlap" to managing editor, *Deborah Greniman, Seminary of Judaic Studies, P.O.Box 8600, 91083 Jerusalem, Israel, fax 972-2-790840; e-mail dvorhg@mail.iol.co.il*

The Pakn-Treger (formerly known by its English translated name The Book Peddler)—of the National Yiddish Book Center— has been transformed from a newsletter into a quarterly magazine of Jewish culture. Recent articles have featured Jewish women such as Dina Abramowicz , YIVO librarian; Miriam Riselle, star of the Yiddish film classic, Tevye; Sharon Rivo and Mimi Krant, of the National Center for Jewish Film; and Laurel Paull, maker of the documentary film on Jewish life in Cuba, "Havana Nagila." A subscription is a benefit of membership ($36 $18 for students or seniors) in the organization famed for the rescue and recirculation of Yiddish books. *National Yiddish Book Center, 48 Woodbridge St., South Hadley, MA 01075; (413)535-1303.*

Conscience: A Newsjournal of Prochoice Catholic Opinion is published quarterly by Catholics for a Free Choice. The Autumn 1996 issue reprinted a long letter to Pope John Paul II, from Dr. Henry Morgentaler, an abortion provider and a leading longtime Canadian Jewish abortion rights activist. Prompted by the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin and a concern for how violent words contribute to violent acts, Morgentaler pleas for the Pope to turn down the volume on his rhetoric against abortion. The publication is free to libraries, $10/year to individuals. *CFC, 1436 U St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20009-3997; (202)986-6093.*

—compiled by Naomi Da

PLEASE TELL

Did you grow up in Israel? How did the Arab/Israeli conflict affect your childhood or teen years? Submit your story—in English—by March 15, 1997 to be considered for the anthology *Children of the Promise* to be published by Simon & Schuster. A $1000 award is offered for the best contribution. Send for guidelines from editor *Laurel Holliday, 4714 Ballard Ave., NW #187, Seattle, WA 98107-4850; e-mail laurelholl@aol.com*

For an anthology of Middle Eastern and North African poetry and art for young people, ages 10-18, to be edited by Naomi Shihab Nye, poets may send by January 1, previously published or unpublished poems about childhood, growing up, your country and culture, family members and personal observations (with an English translation if possible). Artists may send, by February 1, full-color art, in any medium, but no originals since work will not be returned. Include a very brief biography and address, and your phone or fax number. If your work is selected you will be notified and receive a small honorarium and a copy of the finished book. *ME/NA Anthology, Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1230 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020, fax (212)698-2796.*

Do you think you have been taken advantage of sexually by a rabbi or a cantor? Are you the wife of clergy who has suffered from your husband's sexual misconduct with other women? A woman psychotherapist researching this issue, assuring confidentiality, would like to hear from you. *Dr. Charlotte Schwab, 300 E. 75th St., New York, NY 10021; (212)717-5234.*

Were you in Feldafing DP Camp in the American Zone in Southern Germany from 1945? For a master's thesis, can you share documents, testimonials or printed material shedding light on life there? *Haia Karni, 16 Dairyfield Ct., Rockville, MD 20852.*

Photograph of Dina Abramowicz by Colin Hi

LETTERS

ntinued from page 6)

oney to Get to Israel," ımmer 1996). I am cur- ntly also working at terns for Peace. When I eard about Enid's success ising funds, I decided to y the same route she had. I nt more than 40 letters to onservative synagogues in y area of New Jersey, and und very limited support. any told me they only give people in their own com- unities, and others were mply not interested. erhaps because the onservative community oes not emphasize *tikkun am* to the same extent as ie Reform community, the sponses to my requests dif- red from those to Enid's. erhaps because so many ore people from New rsey are traveling to Israel ith various programs and equesting funds, congrega- ons are less likely to give nds to outsiders.

Lauren Erdreich
Zaki Diab Community Center
Tamra, Israel

IGHLIGHTING THE VHOLE MEGILLAH

hank you for your won- erful writing in LILITH. ou captured the entire legillah in a few words. our article was so well ritten. I only would like to orrect the headline: "Artist Ielene Aylon Edits Genesis Vith Her Pink Magic Iarker" (Fall 1996). First, I o not "edit"—God for- id!—I high- light. Second, did not single out Genesis; have highlighted the patri- rchal passages and the missions of the female resence in all five Books f Moses.

The show will be at the San Francisco Jewish Museum until January 5, the Armand Hammer at UCLA January 20-March 23; the Contemporary, Baltimore April 27-June 29; and the Jewish American History Museum, Philadelphia, July 25-December 26.

Helene Aylon
New York, NY

THE ENDLESS STEPPE DOWN UNDER

It was great to see "Sugar & Spice–and Beyond: A Jewish Feminist Take on Children's Books" [Fall 1996].

I was particularly excited to read Esther Hautzig's contribution. She mentioned an I.L. Peretz story about Chaim the porter, who refused to have his wife act as his footstool when he went to heaven. But she forgot to say the wife's name—Chana. That's me! The story of Chaim and Chana has definitely set the standard for me when I get married.

Like others, Hautzig also mentioned Anne of Green Gables, who must be one of the brightest role models for clever girls. While it is very exciting to see that the influences of such a well-known author exactly coincided with my own, it is Ms. Hautzig's book *The Endless Steppe* that deserves special mention. It was on the reading list for my school when I was in Year 8. Not unusual perhaps, but I actually went to a school with a strong Christian tradition. However, throughout the years they had a number of set books with Jewish themes, and in both the primary school and secondary school, my input was not only welcomed but encouraged. In that respect I was very lucky. Ms. Hautzig's story and experience was read, enjoyed and appreciated by a class of 13-year-old middle-class girls in far-off Australia.

Congratulations on reaching the ripe old age of 20! (I am only 21 myself.)

Hannah Mendelson
N.Caulfield,Victoria
Australia

OVERLOOKED, NOT UNDERAPPRECIATED

Some worthy items inadvertently left out of LILITH's 20th Anniversary Poster: LILITH's Lens on Jewish History [Fall 1996]:

•1974: Rosalyn Yalow wins Nobel Prize in science. (Submitted by Doris Gold, Biblio Press, who adds that LILITH ought to publish more about science.)

•1975: First female cantor, Barbara Otsfeld-Horwitz, invested at the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College. (Submitted, *b'shira*, by Cantor Susan Dropkin.)

•1977: Henny Wenkart, a longtime LILITH supporter, reminds us of the founding of the Jewish Women's Resource Center, now a project of National Council of Jewish Women-New York Section.

•1994: Rabbi Shohama Wiener inaugurated as president of the Academy for Jewish Religion. (Submitted by Rabbi Goldie Milgram, Associate Dean.)

CORRECTIONS:

•*The Hillel-women list is maintained by the Hillel International Center. The server was incorrecly given in the Fall 1996 issue. To subscribe, e-mail hillel-women-request@offer-ent.com with the mesage "join".*

•*Adam Lazarre-White and Khary Lazarre-White are the sons of Jane Lazarre and Douglas White. Their last name was given incorrectly in "Are You Black or Are You Jewish?" in the Fall 1996 issue.*

•*Melanie Kaye/ Kantrowitz's essay "To Be a Radical Jew in the Late 20th Century" from* The Issue is Power: Essays on Women, Jews, Violence and Resistence" *is the source of a quotation used in Debra Schultz's dissertation on Jewish women in the Civil Rights movement. Reference to the essay was inadvertently omitted in the Fall 1996 issue.*

•*There are approximately 250 women in the Association for Jewish Studies' Women's Caucus. That number did not attend the caucus' breakfast in 1996, as was indicated on the poster in the Fall 1996 issue.*

•*Reader Li Boiskin of Cape Town, South Africa, lets us know that the 1897 First Zionist Conference mentioned in LILITH's timeline poster took place in Basel, Switzerland (we knew that!) and not in Berlin (which snuck into the timeline by mistake).*

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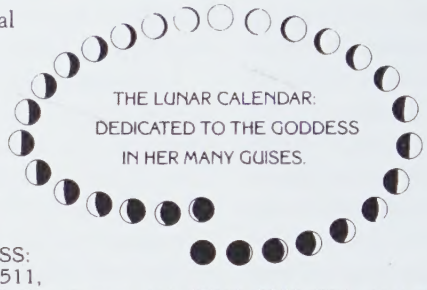

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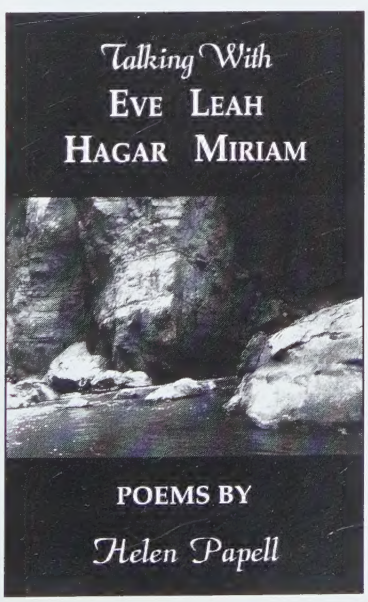

"It Was No Fun"

For Jewish women, the immigrant experience was one of love unexpressed.

Ruth Gay's Unfinished People: Eastern European Jews Encounter America *(Norton, 1997) explores through research and personal memory the day-to-day experience of "those 'unfinished people' who were easily overwhelmed and intimidated in a world that they never quite grasped." Drawing on her own memories of growing up in the Bronx, the child of immigrants, Gay creates a sensitive history of the interface of these women and men with American life.*

In the following excerpt, taken from a chapter called "Girls," she traces the legacy of anxiety and self-denial that was packed in the immigrant woman's bag, carried to this country, and passed on to her first-generation daughter.

A lot changed in America, but ingrained attitudes did not fade easily. Romantic gestures of embracing, kissing, and hand-holding were not often seen among the immigrant population. . . . Even on the Yiddish stage, passion was expressed more through speech than gesture. Couples may have esteemed and even loved one another, but they had not yet mastered the Western vocabulary of love. The old physical barriers between the sexes exerted their inimical force. Engaged couples did not hold hands or gaze into one another's eyes in public. . . .

When I pressed one woman friend to describe her childhood in the Bronx, she could only answer starkly, "There was no fun." In a situation where parents worried steadily and visibly about endangered relatives in Europe, about holding on to their jobs, about how to make ends meet, there was neither the will nor the talent for the sporting good times on a shoestring that seemed to be featured in our books about the happy poor. There were no cheerful excursions to a nearby creek with makeshift fishing poles, no happy neighborly picnics. Each household, it must be said, was miserable in its own way. . . .

Perhaps if there had been more kissing there would have been less fighting. But kissing and endearments were mostly reserved for very young children—and then all the delicious diminutives of which Yiddish is capable would come out. Babies created a free zone where tenderness could be legitimately expressed in language and touch. "Little bird, little crown, my own treasure, little sweetness, little mother, little father," and on and on. Every name with the addition of a few suffixes could be turned into a poem. But they had not yet learned the language of love in English. . . .

"Couples had not yet mastered the Western vocabulary of love."

I think that the immigrant generation did not see happiness as a legitimate goal in life. It was what happened when all one's obligations had been fulfilled. . . . If at the end of their lives they could fold their hands and enjoy the benefits of peace and prosperity, the affection of their children, did they have the *right* to ask for more? . . .

"Dayenu" was a stern creed, and not altogether appropriate to the richness of American life. It was perhaps a creed that worked where poverty was so widespread that a roof over one's head and enough to eat were all that one could hope for. But in the New World, immigrant women saw stretching before them infinite possibilities, and their restlessness with their constricted past and their wish to capture something of the variety of the present led to those mixed signals that their daughters received. . . .

I think that that generation, [the dau-gters of immigrants], never ceased to marvel at how far they had come. Although they had not known the fear of the persecution and pogroms, they had tasted at first hand discrimination fueled by anti-Semitism and the dread of joblessness that the Depression left behind. This did not leave them unmarked. In their later years, they nourished a hidden fear that their fine positions and beautiful houses could, might, all vanish overnight. So they worked out their secret, fallback positions, the place, perhaps, where they "ought" to have landed if American opportunity had not propelled them so far.

So much of all this has been kept secret. Just as the immigrant generation kept silent about their primitive lives in the villages from which they came, about customs that they feared would elicit laughter or contempt from their American children, these very American children have kept their own secrets. Among ourselves, we said: *"Dayenu."* We knew how far we had come. We were pleased with our work. We had encompassed a whole new civilization and had devised a way to live in it. But we knew how much more our brothers and husbands had accomplished, how we had lagged behind them, and a little of that shame prevented us from facing our own daughters. It was their fathers and uncles who were the doctors and scientists, the university professors, the world renowned musicians and Nobel Prize winners.

Inset photograph from *The World of Our Mothers* by Sydney Stahl Weinberg (University of North Carolina Press, 19